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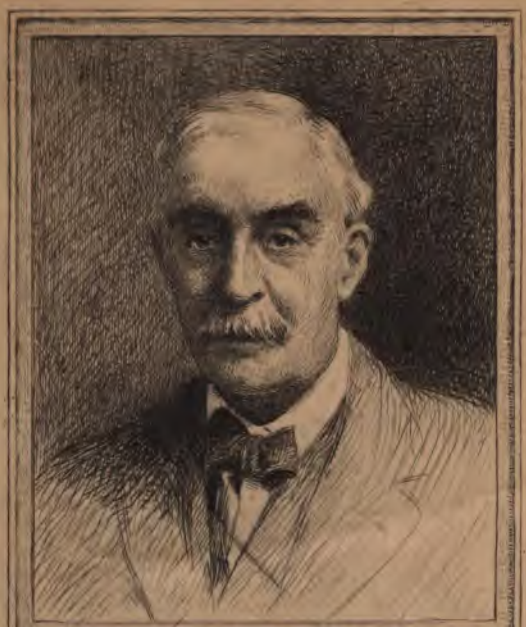
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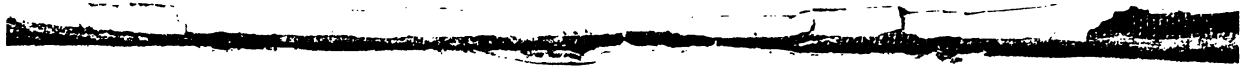
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NATURAL RELIGION.

BY (M.) JULES SIMON.

TRANSLATED BY J. W. COLE.

EDITED, WITH PREFACE AND NOTES,

BY THE REV. J. B. MARSDEN, M.A.,

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PREFACE BY THE EDITOR.

"It is an immense conclusion," says Dr. Paley, "that there is a God: a perceiving, intelligent, designing being, at the head of creation, and from whose will it proceeded." At this conclusion we arrive either by accepting the statements contained in the Bible, or by mere reason without the assistance of revelation. But the conclusion, however gained, involves mighty consequences; namely, the duties we owe to the Creator while here, and our destiny hereafter. Thus we have the two systems of NATURAL and REVEALED RELIGION. The one derived from reason, the other from the holy Scriptures. The volume now before us treats only of the former of these two, and of that only in one of its several branches, as we shall explain hereafter.

To introduce the subject to the reader it may be convenient to remind him that a distinction has been drawn between natural theology and natural religion; regarding the one as the science, and the other as the subject of which it treats.* Thus, natural theology has respect to the being and attributes of God; natural religion, to his

* By Lord Brougham, for example, in his Discourse on Natural Theology.

designs respecting our existence in a future state, and our principles and conduct in the present. The distinction, however, does not seem to have been observed by our own great writers, who use the terms indifferently, nor by M. Jules Simon, who though he dwells more fully on the being and attributes of God, does not overlook the moral obligations of his creatures resulting from them. Perhaps it is to be regretted that the distinction has been so generally disregarded; for it seems to us both real and of some importance. For it may be at least conceived that natural theology should be true, and yet natural religion false; or that, (which is certainly the case,) the discoveries of the one should be comparatively full and satisfactory, those of the other meagre and inconclusive. Or, in other words, we might by the exercise of reason without any assistance from revelation have arrived at the discovery that a God exists, without being able to prosecute our researches with success into another question of equal moment; namely, the duties which belong to us in consequence, and the kind of worship which the Deity will accept. However, in deference to the example of our greatest writers, Paley, Bishop Butler, Dr. Samuel Clarke and others, we shall not insist upon a point which they have overlooked or disregarded.

Natural theology, then, or natural religion, regarding them as one and the same, constitute a real science, the truth of which is recognised in the Scriptures, both of the old and new Testament. "The heavens," says the Psalmist, "declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handy-work—day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their

line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." Here the wisdom and power of God, and therefore his existence, are argued from his visible creation. The order and structure of the universe declares its divine author. St. Paul makes use of a similar argument where he asserts that the heathen are left without excuse, though without a revelation, "because that which may be known of God," by the light of nature, "is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." Here the great principles of natural religion are clearly stated: the visible world is a sufficient proof of the existence of a Creator; it gives at least some insight into his character, so far as to show his eternal power and Godhead. It leaves the heathen, much more the atheist, without excuse; the one because the visible universe contradicts his gross conceptions, the other because it belies his irrational denial, of a God.

Still natural religion lies under a certain degree of prejudice; and it is singular enough that it should have been assailed from time to time by men of the most opposite principles; by those who scarcely acknowledged the inspiration of Holy Scripture in any sense, and by those who carried their views of inspiration to the most fastidious height, maintaining that all knowledge and science, as well as all true religion, are to be found within the sacred volume. Faustus Socinus, the founder of modern Unitarianism, denied the power of man to discover the being of God by the light of nature: he denied that it could be proved from the creature or from creation,

that there is a God. In order to establish this position he proposed to explain away the force of the passage we have quoted from St. Paul, "in an explication in which," says Bishop Pearson, who criticises it with his usual acuteness, "there is nothing which is not forced and distorted. By this way of interpretation," he adds, "no sentence of Scripture can have any certain sense."* This opinion of Socinus, though by no means the creed of all modern Unitarians, has yet from time to time reappeared among his followers. Gilbert Wakefield avowed it in the last century. The Hutchinsonians on the other hand, zealous friends of revelation, aimed, about the same time, to prove that there is no such thing as natural religion at all. Hutchinson "looked upon natural religion as deism in disguise, an engine of the devil in these latter days for the overthrow of the gospel."† In his opinions, philosophical and religious, he had several followers of great respectability, such as bishop Horne of Norwich, Parkhurst the lexicographer, Jones of Nayland, and the pious Romaine. Dr. Ellis published, in 1743, a Treatise entitled "The knowledge of divine things from revelation, not from Reason or Nature," in which he undertook to prove that "neither the being of a God nor any other principle of religion could possibly be deduced from the study of the phenomena of the universe." Dr. Magee, the late archbishop of Dublin, is said to have been a follower of Dr. Ellis in his sentiments respecting natural religion. The argument on which they chiefly rest amounts to this; that the mind having no knowledge but of sensible things can abstract no ideas from matter but such as are material.

* Pearson on the Creed; Note to Article I.
† Jones's Life of Bishop Horne.

"Without an instructor to open his eyes, it would be impossible, therefore, for man to conceive of an angelic being; for he can have no idea of a substance purely spiritual, still less could he form a notion of God who is yet more remote from matter."

It will be seen from M. Jules Simon's Preface to the Third Edition of his work, that this fundamental objection to the whole science of Natural Religion is now powerful in France. In England, amongst our wisest and most thoughtful men, no such prejudice exists. Lord Brougham, in his Discourse of Natural Theology, published about twenty years ago, alluded to it as prevailing to some extent. This led Dr. Turton, now Bishop of Ely, to examine the facts of the question, in his "Natural Theology considered; with reference to Lord Brougham's Discourse on that subject." And the result of his enquiries was, that during the last thirty years there had not been more than one learned man in the University of Cambridge, who avowedly professed the leading doctrines of Dr. Ellis's Treatise. Milner, Dean of Carlisle, condemned in the strongest terms Ellis's scheme of rejecting the operations of the human mind as one of the primary sources of our knowledge of God. His brother, Joseph Milner, the ecclesiastical historian, spoke thus:—"St. Paul being judge, God has not left himself without witness even in the natural world. The works of creation speak to us from without; and the moral nature, which he has given us, speaks to us from within. In conjunction, they declare his being and sovereign authority, his power, wisdom and goodness, his equitable government, and the accountableness of the human race for all their moral conduct before him. And this," he adds, "is the utmost stretch of natural religion,

an intuitive feeling rather than the result of a laborious investigation."*

These may be taken, as almost without exception, the sentiments of our best divines. Still, in many pious minds, there exists, unquestionably, to some extent, a certain distaste for the whole subject of Natural Theology. They feel as if the two systems were rivals, and that whatever credit the one gained was so much loss to the other; and they are alarmed lest the progress of natural religion should prove at length dangerous to revelation. They seem to think that if any discovery be thus made of a first cause and another world, it would be no longer true that life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel. These scruples are certainly entitled to respect; and it must be allowed that instances have not been wanting, in which the enemies of revelation have made use of natural theology for this very purpose. Appealing to the light of nature and the voice of reason as their guide, they have treated the religion of the Bible with contempt, as being certainly superfluous and therefore of little authority, or of none at all; and earnest, simple-minded Christians have shrunk from a study which they saw thus mischievously used. Again, it is true that several writers of eminence on the side of natural religion, have allowed themselves to speak of the Supreme Being, if not with presumption, yet without that "reverence and godly fear," with which every devout Christian wishes to approach the subject. There is something hard and offensive in the freedom of their manner, when no exception can be taken against their statements;—a rude familiarity with sacred things, which strongly contrasts

* Letter to Gibbon on his Decline and Fall, &c.

with the subdued and reverential style of holy writ. There is scarcely a treatise on the Attributes to which these objections do not, in our opinion, in some degree apply; and to a certain extent they are perhaps inseparable from such discussions; the effect, however, is not the less painful to devout minds.

As to the argument that natural religion supersedes revealed religion, it scarcely deserves a serious refutation. Indeed it has never been advanced by any writer of reputation on either side. It is the idle jargon of infidelity on the one hand, or of a too feeble and timid Christianity on the other. Indeed, natural theology should be studied if for no higher purpose, with this aim in view, namely, that the student may ascertain for himself with certainty the meagre limits of that knowledge of divine things which may be had from nature and from reason only. The three sources of natural religion are the works of nature, the *à priori* reasoning, and the voice of conscience and the whole internal economy of man. But how few, after all, are the conclusions which they can be said to place beyond the reach of doubt! Paley's magnificent argument from final causes, proves a unity of design in the works of nature, but it scarcely proves the unity of God. The *à priori* argument, if its soundness be admitted, proves indeed the unity, but leaves us sorely at fault with regard to the attributes, of God. What natural theology does is this: it prepares man to expect a revelation; it shows his need of one; and therefore it should teach him to receive it meekly and with unbounded gratitude. For it assures him that there is a great unseen Creator; it suggests to him the high degree of probability, at least, that to this unseen

Creator he is held accountable; and it conveys to him a few dim intimations of a life to come. But here it forsakes him, and leaves him still a prey to anxiety and doubt. "When the utmost has been made," says Bishop Turton, "of natural religion, it can give no intimation on subjects on which revelation is the most copious; the various dispensations of God towards man, our redemption from the effects of transgression, and in the language of the creed, 'the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.'" Nothing can be more instructive, or, we will add, to a devout Christian more satisfactory, than the profound silence of the one compared with the authoritative declarations of the other, on questions which involve the present and eternal happiness of man. Of the volume now in the reader's hand, the most unsatisfactory parts are those in which the author attempts to show the nature, and prove the necessity of prayer and of public worship from natural religion, and to show that from that source we are supplied with a rule of life. His guide has forsaken him, and he wanders in the dark; and, after all, he is obliged to confess that "we can only speak with fear and hesitation of the nature of God" (p. 217). Natural religion then has no clear and well-defined instructions for us on those points upon which it is all important that we should be instructed well.

The Treatise of M. Jules Simon, which is now offered to the reader in an English translation, has obtained a popularity abroad, which is seldom granted to works of abstruse philosophical discussion. Making every allowance for the fermentation of the public mind in France upon several of the topics on which he speaks, a metaphysical treatise on the existence of God and the Divine attributes

would scarcely have passed in a short time through three editions, in Paris, had not its ability been of a high order; nor, it may be added, if the opinions against which it is directed were not widely diffused upon the continent.

These opinions are represented by the word PANTHEISM. They have obtained a footing in our own country, and are not without their advocates in our seats of learning. A strange and fearful portent, when the dreams of a heathen philosophy are once more revived, and publicly taught, not only by men who profess and call themselves Christians, but by those who are the teachers of Christian morals!

It is very difficult to explain in a few words the modern doctrine of Pantheism. Its advocates write in an obscure style, and seem to us to conceal under the shelter of a new and difficult verbiage great confusion of ideas. In general, however, it may be thus described:—it denies the personality of the deity, and confounds the Creator with the universe. It presents us as the great first cause with a simple indivisible element or power, which pervades all things, but without any personality implied or understood. Creation is either denied, or else considered not as a possible but a necessary act; so that the deity was compelled to produce the universe, with which he is in fact identified. Thus the divine nature has neither independence of existence, nor spontaneity of action. It lies under a necessary influence; and the created thing, which we call a universe, is really a part of the Creator himself; it is nothing more than a manifestation of his existence. Thus, in effect, Pantheism is but a disguised Atheism; for a divine being, acting under the force of an external law, or necessary influence, is not, and cannot be, supreme. A God who cannot but pass into activity, and thus identify

his nature with his own creation, has no longer a personality, nor in truth a real existence. Yet such are the dogmas of Pantheism. In fact they represent the supreme being as at once God, Nature, and Humanity.

Against the writers of this school, the argument from final causes makes no impression. They speak with undisguised contempt of Paley. Design, it is true, may prove a designer and a designing mind; but that mind may be the universe itself, or the *anima mundi* of the philosophers of old.

To speak of the impiety of these sentiments would be a waste of words; their folly and absurdity ought however to be exposed, and this is the work which M. Jules Simon has undertaken.

Up to the present time no vigorous attempt has been made in England to resist the rising flood. Pantheism, or as we should prefer to call it, Atheism, is not yet, it is true, fully developed amongst us. It is known in England rather by what it denies than by its assertions; it works insidiously, teaching the student to disbelieve and doubt rather than to embrace any fixed creed. Yet it is haughty and supercilious; affects profoundness; and disdains the manly simplicity of such writers as Butler and Paley; whilst it buries its own shallowness beneath an exterior of philosophical acuteness and depth. It has in short just those qualities which are calculated to entice the half educated, and to dazzle and mislead the young.

No apology then is needed for the translation of the work in the reader's hand. M. Jules Simon attacks Pantheism with its own weapons, pure reason and metaphysical argument. The treatise is divided into four distinct sections. 1. On the Nature of God. 2. On

Providence, or the Interference of Deity in the Affairs of Man. 3. On the Immortality of the Soul. 4. On Worship. He begins by examining closely, and yet fairly, the different arguments by which natural theology has endeavoured to demonstrate the being and attributes of God, and in language clear, vigorous, and simple, shows the mistakes of the various schools of philosophy, while he does justice to their triumphs. Thus, he places before us the argument from conscience and innate ideas; that of Samuel Clarke and Leibnitz from the nature of infinite space, and from axioms or self-evident truths; and above all the most popular and easy one from the phenonoma of the visible universe. Of the latter he says, and we think with truth:—"But the misfortune of this argument is, that, while it proves invincibly what it undertakes to prove, it does not establish all that is necessary. The God who has made the world is unquestionably powerful and intelligent, but does he possess infinity of power and intelligence? Between a God simply capable of making the world, and a perfect God, there is still an infinite abyss. We perceive here below, beauties and perfections in vast numbers, but we find also plenty of disorder. The induction which concludes the perfection of the Creator from the greatness of his work, does not supply any explanation of the evil that exists in the world." *

He then proceeds to establish the great truths of natural religion on a basis which he considers at once more broad and solid; and, discarding metaphysical theories, proves from the nature and constitution of man himself that God exists, and then modestly concludes thus: "Assuredly, there is here no new demonstration;

* Page 12.

who could dream of producing a new demonstration of the existence of God? Still less is there any attempt at a new form of demonstration: on the contrary, we have gone back to the most ancient, the simplest, the most familiar, and (for that reason) the best of all forms—meditation in place of reasoning." The argument which follows is presented to the reader in a form so clear and beautiful by M. Jules Simon that any analysis of his work would be quite superfluous. The chapters on the incomprehensibility of God, on creation, and pantheism, and that on providence, will be read with admiration, even though we should except against some inferences, or some opinions in them. And if the disquisitions on the existence of evil, and the divine immutability, seem to be less conclusive, let it be borne in mind that our author has but failed in a task which no man has yet accomplished. Yet even here his passing remarks are often of great value. Take, for instance, the clearly-drawn and eloquent distinction between what is incomprehensible and what we call a mystery. "These two words, mystery and incomprehensibility, are often used synonymously. It is clear that all mystery is incomprehensible, but everything that is incomprehensible is not of necessity a mystery. To admit an incomprehensibility, is to acknowledge that reason has limits; to admit a mystery, is to have recourse to some other authority than reason. When we maintain that God is incomprehensible, we express nothing more than an acknowledgment of our own insignificance. But when it is said that he is one in three hypostases, a gratuitous opinion is expressed upon the nature of an incomprehensible being; an hypothesis is constructed which rests neither on reason nor experience. There can be no

possible confusion between two assertions of such opposite natures." *

The brevity and force of the reasoning, and the singular felicity of the illustrations frequently remind us of Pascal's most striking passages. For instance,—" If man had no existence, the world would resemble one of the palaces which have been restored and refurnished after a revolution, that they may be preserved to history and art. All has resumed its place, the council table, the crown, the sceptre—nothing is absent *but the King.*" †

M. Jules Simon writes as a Roman Catholic, and in a country of Roman Catholics; and, fearless in his investigations on all other subjects, he seems to evade rather than to meet the difficulties with which the Church of Rome embarrasses her more inquiring and thoughtful children. He is constantly embarrassed with the apprehension that the dogmas of Christianity, as he terms them, may be found inconsistent with reason. This apprehension cannot arise, as the admirable passage we have just quoted shows, from that confusion of thought which confounds the mysterious with the incomprehensible, or either of them with the irrational. It is not difficult to point out its source: it evidently proceeds from the fact that he sees no difference between the teaching of the Scriptures and the teaching of the Church. Both have with him equal authority, and in consequence his clear intellect is grievously disturbed. We have omitted a few passages, chiefly in the concluding chapter, in which he enters into details which have no bearing upon the general tenor of the argument; and which are more applicable to the state of religious feeling and

* Page 139. † Page 108.

opinion in France than in England. They seem brought in per force, and the omission is due both to ourselves and to our readers.

Nor will the Protestant reader expect to find in these pages those accurate statements of Christian doctrine which are the glory of Protestant churches, reposing only on the strong foundations of the written Word of God. On the contrary, the merit of good works is frequently implied; the corruption of human reason in consequence of the Fall is too often overlooked; and in the chapter on prayer there are crude statements which, however consistent with a sentimental piety, are not in simple unison with the statements of Scripture. On two important questions of theology, the Editor has added notes which will be found at the end of the volume.

The volume of M. Jules Simon is a great work. It shows by fresh arguments the eternal truth of the leading principles common both to natural and revealed religion. It silences the folly of atheism, and repels the assaults of the modern pantheist. The author has thrown a charm around discussions, which even the learned have thought dry and difficult; and if, after all, many important questions remain unsettled, notwithstanding the force of reasoning which has been brought to bear upon them, the disappointment will serve to show the comparatively narrow range within which human reason or natural theology can act; and to dispose the reader to return once more with deeper reverence and gratitude to the inspired word of God. And this, we must repeat, is one of the legitimate uses, and that by no means the least important, of Natural Theology.

PREFACE TO THE THIRD FRENCH EDITION.

If there was ever an un-aggressive book, it is this. Nevertheless it has excited, in very opposite camps, some animated polemics. This arises from the great number of questions touched upon, and perhaps from the sincerity of the author. When I have thought my friends and masters were going astray I have not hesitated to say so. In consequence of this I have been asked, to which side do you belong? I am, thank heaven, of no side in philosophy. I write on such grave matters that I cannot suffer myself to be guided by anything but truth.

The greater part of the objections urged, apply less to the particular form of my book, than to spiritual philosophy in general. This philosophy, more popular than ever with those who are little accustomed to reflect or write, is not in favour at present with certain ardent spirits, who, engaged in a war of principles, think of nothing but what their theory requires, and are desirous of bringing back everything to a simplicity which science does not allow. I shall endeavour to point out in what their error consists, and also to show, by ascending a little higher, through what a series of misunderstanding, spiritual philosophy is, at this day, treated as an enemy by the most divided of the belligerent parties.

If I use the phrase of the quarrel between reason and faith, no one will suppose that I intend to give a history of this contest

in a short preface. The quarrel is nearly as old as the world, and dates from a period much anterior to the birth of Christianity. We can scarcely hope to see it ever terminated, for there will always be, according to the expression of Malebranche, minds who are anxious to see clearly, and others determined to believe blindly; for, as long as human nature lasts, men will incessantly strive to impose on men their own particular belief or scepticism.

This quarrel between reason and faith is looked upon, according to the construction of minds, under three different aspects. Christian philosophers maintain that philosophy and religion are equally sound and true; that they ought to agree on all points when both are well understood, and that there is in fact no contest except between false religion and false philosophy.

This opinion entails a consequence which must not be lost sight of. To be a Christian is not only to accept to-day the fundamental truths of Christianity, but to accept and practise them always. Now philosophy rests upon free inquiry; it is therefore, at the least, susceptible of change, for it advances by gradual and slow progress towards truth, and never completely discovers it at the first glance. Orthodox to-day, it may cease to be so to-morrow. A philosopher who desires to be truly a Christian, must hold himself ready to renounce reason as soon as reason appears to him to separate itself from orthodoxy. This declaration of conformity has therefore for an indispensable corollary, the subordination of reason to faith: in other words, a Christian may be a philosopher, provided that, according to the consecrated formula, he considers philosophy as the servant of theology.

Let me now speak of the philosophers who acknowledge no authority but that of reason. They may be divided into two classes. The first, amongst which I enrol myself, believe that the religious and philosophical forms are destined to be ever separated and to subsist entirely independent of each other, because they

apply to two very different, but real necessities of human nature:* and the other class, regarding the principle of authority and the principle of liberty, not as being distinct, but as positive enemies, admit neither reconciliation nor co-existence between them, and rest all the hopes of man upon the absolute suppression and extinction of the principles that they reject.

Of the three contrary opinions I have here recapitulated, the first represents peace, and the third war. The second implies, at the most, only controversy. Now, it is neither of peace, nor of simple controversy that I propose to speak, but of war. This is actively carried on at the present moment. We may remember the origin of the last campaign. The revolution of July had produced a truce: the principle of state religion was abolished, and universal liberty of worship recognised. Reason felt satisfied. The churches, on their part, finding themselves not only tolerated, but respected and favoured, remained in peace; on both sides the question was confined to argument without passion or bitterness.

The quarrel broke out anew upon the subject of instruction.

The State, under the Restoration and the government of July, had preserved, from the imperial institutions, the privileges of the University. It is with the University as with all the other machinery of centralisation; it forms an excellent auxiliary to those who use it, and a terrible obstacle to others who suffer from its use. A portion of the clergy began by claiming the exclusive liberty of instruction; but, instead of confining themselves to asking this as a civil right, and as a natural consequence of the liberal institutions by which the country was then governed, they adopted perhaps a more adroit, but certainly a less honourable course; they assailed the university with calumny.

The University, at first, defended itself weakly. Its heads

* "There will always be Pelagians and Catholics, and war between them."—Pascal, *Thoughts*, Art. xxiv. 12, ed. Havet. p. 301.

declared, with haughtiness, that they saw no reason why they should speak in their own cause. Their merits were discussed in the journals and in the tribune, but merely in a political point of view, and by men generally unacquainted with the spirit of their teaching, and the character of the establishment.

There sprang up besides, from this question, a very unfortunate equivocation, which could not be imputed to the clergy. The clergy, by the nature of their institution, represent the principle of authority; the State, represents the authority for the time constituted and consequently the University; and the philosophers who defended the University, ought to have represented the principle of liberty. The exact contrary took place. We saw the ultramontanists demand the privileges of liberty, and the philosophers demonstrate that these privileges were dangerous. The public did not trouble themselves to enquire whether the clergy were right in declaring themselves liberal, nor whether they had cared for liberty of instruction, when under the Restoration the University had belonged to them. No one listened to the philosophers who declared that the clergy only wanted this liberty for themselves, and that with their immense resources they would easily compel the concurrence of the laity, or extinguish their influence altogether. This grand word liberty, which was then in its full ascendant, obtained numerous partisans for all who invoked it, and it soon became evident that the University, supported by the government, had fallen in general opinion.

The solution, to speak of it incidentally, was very simple. It became necessary to accord liberty because it was a right, and to maintain the University by its side, to prevent liberty from becoming a monopoly in the hands of the only great association that subsists in France. But all this is an old history to-day; to-morrow it may become interesting again. Under the restriction of the Constituent Assembly, the privileges of the University

were re-established and strengthened some years afterwards, without exciting the least attention on the part of any of the warmest advocates of liberty of instruction. After more than ten years of bitter contest, the question of the schools on both sides amounted to little more than a pretext. The ultra-montanists were fighting against reason, the right of free inquiry, and liberty of conscience; their adversaries, after having assaulted the Jesuits, and taken up, by degrees, the views of the encyclopedia, were dying with a desire to attack Christianity.

But who are these adversaries? No longer the universitarians, who (very contrary to their own wish) had completely disappeared before the University itself; but the Voltairians, the materialists, and the atheists; or, as they call themselves, a little jesuitically perhaps, the sceptics. In like manner, as by the side of the clergy there are the ultra-montanists who speak the loudest, so on the opposite side are the Voltairians, who make the greatest clamour, but are the soonest consumed. These are they, who from the origin of the dispute, effected a diversion so favourable to the interests of the clergy by attacking in concert with them the philosophy of the university, which they qualified by the title of official philosophy. At that time, (for we lose nothing by being just), they were influenced by a sentiment, honourable in itself, a sort of highly legitimate horror of equivocation, half-measures, and perplexed or doubtful predicaments. Escaping from thence, they elevated their radicalism more and more, and this became the easier to them, as scarcely belonging to philosophy, except through this polemic, they were unrestrained by any scientific scruple. Their fault and misfortune have been to confound moderation with weakness, the sincere expression of an honest faith with interested concessions, and to exclaim against want of candour as often as opinions are uttered by their partisans, contrary to those which they have adopted and patronise. Because

they are pantheists, or materialists, or sceptics, they persuade themselves that a philosopher, who differs from some points of their system, is either inconsistent, or inclined to pass over to the camp of the enemy. If through this erroneous interpretation they only sacrificed impartiality, the evil would be but half consummated, and they would remain the sole sufferers. But they disturb the consciences of others by giving themselves up to unjust and intemperate discussions, and by attacking liberty in the name of liberty itself. When we, and other spiritualists, desire to preserve the independence of thought, and at the same time, to acknowledge all the great truths of religion which form the noble and imperishable conquests of our school, we find ourselves exposed to the cross fire of two contending parties. The ultramontanists exclaim, "You have no right, being recognisers of religion, to remain rationalists, for reason is condemned to scepticism." Their enemies retort, "You have no right, being free thinkers, to declare yourselves religious; for nothing is true but positive science, and all your theories respecting God, Creation, and Futurity, ought to be referred back to revealed religion."

This attempt of extreme theologians to reduce all dissenters from their creed to the condition of sceptics, under the pretence that reason can establish nothing, has been often combated. There would be little use in recommencing against them a discussion constantly renewed and invariably unavailing. In their anxiety to demonstrate the necessity of revelation, they go to the length of asserting that all our ideas, principles, and powers, are derived from that source alone; that without an established church we could neither believe in God, nor conceive the idea of his divine nature; that if, in remote antiquity, there were pagans who worshipped the true God, these great convictions of the origin of the earth, the destiny of man, and the immortality of the soul, have come to them from the Jewish nation, at that

time unknown to and despised by the rest of the world, and who alone had received the word of God as its faithful depositories. They are not dismayed by the difficulty of thus explaining by tradition all that recorded history and sound sense compel us to attribute to the spontaneous effort of human thought. They care little to encumber themselves with this unnecessary burden, for they have more boldness than judgment. When they are told by Bayle and all the great controversialists, that before we submit to authority, it is first requisite to decide that it is legitimate and necessary; that we are then to argue, to believe in principles and the deductions drawn from them; and that consequently, the very abdication of reason implies an act of faith in the authority of reason; they either turn a deaf ear, or according to the usual custom of unintelligent and obstinate temperaments, reply by scurrility and insult. No one will ever convince them, for they themselves only submit in trembling to an authority which they proclaim irrefragable, and which would leave them a prey to the most complete and terrifying scepticism if they abandoned it. The universal Church has frequently condemned this absolute proscription of reason. Let us draw attention here to the terms of the last formula of the congregation of the *Index*. It begins with these words: "Although faith is above reason." . . . . We are not surprised, for we have ourselves explained that it is impossible to be an orthodox Christian without admitting this proposition; but let us hear the rest. "Art. I. Though faith is above reason, there can be no true disagreement between them, and they lend, on the contrary, mutual support to each other, for they both proceed from the same source, and rest equally upon the word of God."* "Art. II. We can prove with certainty, by

* "I. Etsi fides sit supra rationem, nulla tamen vera dissensio, nullum dissidium inter ipsas inveniri potest, cum ambo ab uno eodemque immutabili veritatis fonte, Deo optimo maximo, oriuntur, atque sibi mutuam opem ferant."

reason, the existence of God, the spirituality of the soul, and the free will of man. Faith comes after reason, and consequently it cannot be effectually employed to prove the existence of God to atheists, the spirituality of the soul to materialists, or liberty to fatalists."* "Art. III. The use of reason precedes faith. Reason leads man to faith, with the aid of revelation and grace."†

Reason is therefore something, oh ye enemies of reason, according to an authority which you have no right to question. Submit then on the strength of your own principles. Tell us no longer that without revelation we can neither believe in God, nor prove the immortality of the soul, for we have against you an auxiliary before whom you must bow in silence. We have no occasion to appeal to ecclesiastical authority to establish our belief in reason; but this authority delivers us from you and your arguments. You are in reality the dissenters and rebels from the universal Church, and if we desired to seek for what your eternal disputes prove, and to draw advantage from them, we would say that they supply an argument against the unity of faith and profession which you attribute with so much power and display to your particular communion. You dispute with us incessantly, you insult and calumniate us; nevertheless, history will record, that you assist our views, while you obstruct your own.

In revenge, the atheists, the materialists, the sceptics, and the apostles of positive science who reply to you in the journals, and who agree with you in anathematising spiritualistic philosophy, inflict without intending it, more injury on reason and freedom of thought than you will ever be able to accomplish. In listening

* "II. Ratiocinatio Dei existentiam, animæ spiritualitatem, hominis libertatem, cum certitudine probare potest. Fides posterior est revelatione, proindéque ad probandum Dei existentiam contra Atheum, ad probandum animæ rationalem spiritualitatem ac libertatem contra naturalismi et fatalismi sectatorem, allegari convenienter nequit."

† "III. Rationis usus fidem precedit, et ad eam hominem ope revelationis et gratiæ conducit." Ef. c. v., 8.

to their invectives against those amongst us who represent the school of Descartes, we might fancy ourselves present at one of the nocturnal battles, in which the soldiers of the same army decimate each other, while they believe that they are firing on the enemy. Are they then so blinded by pride that they are not shaken by the shouts of exultation which burst from the opposing camp when they have insulted spiritual philosophy. Does their doctrine of annihilation so obstruct their sight that they no longer recognise the flag of liberty when carried by other hands? Alas! if fanaticism can ever be excused, it is when its pretext is faith; but these insults, sarcasms, and treasons become incomprehensible when we see them employed on the side of empty reason and intolerant freedom. How! You believe in nothing, and are you not humbled? Do you pretend to speak of philosophy without either knowing its history or comprehending its terms? Or perhaps, if you do know something of the history of philosophy, you have not acquired your knowledge from Plato, Zeno, Descartes, or Leibnitz. You have issued from the schools of these great masters with cold hearts and unenlightened minds, replying to enthusiasm with raillery, and mistaking your impotence for strength. In this absence of sound ideas and doctrines, to what would you reduce human nature if it were committed to your charge?

The spiritualists have long been accused of feeding on chimeras: this accusation was launched against them at the outset of their schools. Positive minds imagine that nothing is serious or real unless proved by experience; and while they admit, without discussion, the data of the senses, and reduce all things to a few generalisations, with no other value than that of a method, they include in the same negative the innate principles of human reason, and the invisible world which these principles discover to us. But, to confine ourselves here to the foundations of spiritualistic

doctrine, plain sense suffices, in the absence of science, to show that there are first truths, anterior and superior to all experience. Experience produces neither the principle of contradiction nor that of causality; not even that of justice. Every principle founded on experience must necessarily possess the characteristics of experience itself, and can only have the value of an induction. Every day we might be in apprehension lest some new advance of science should transform or annihilate justice. Is this the general opinion of men? Is there one by whom the truth of the principle of causality is considered doubtful or dependent on the amount of experience? What can be looked upon as proved, what is there solid in philosophy, in the experimental sciences, or in the transactions of life, if the principle of causality is not established beyond a doubt? Of all realities the most real, of all evidences the most evident, those which men universally believe in without restriction or rescue, are the principle of causality, the principle of contradiction, and the principle of justice,—and these they irresistibly acknowledge, by an absolute necessity of their nature. Not only do they believe these, but they could not believe any thing else without this foundation of faith. They could neither reason, speak, nor think. They think: there is, therefore, something fixed and immovable in their minds. They speak: consequently, there must be in every human imagination principles anterior to all communication by words. They reason: they must, therefore, possess a fulcrum inaccessible to the powers of reasoning, upon which all reasoning rests. This doctrine is as evidently clear to a child as to a Descartes, and those who affect to dispute it, to add more weight to revelation, or to reduce human intelligence entirely to the data of the senses and practical experience, do not themselves see to the full depth of their own doctrine. Their doubt is either levity or despair. They argue against us, they prove their doubts

by demonstrative reasoning; and what is it to prove, if not to believe in a principle, and to admit also that this principle being bestowed by nature, another may be derived from it through science? Oh, ye collectors of clouds and obscurities! absolute doubt is even more difficult than faith. You employ dogmatism to combat dogmatism. You deny movement, yet you walk. You dispute with us the right of having principles, while you make use of the very principle we acknowledge. You reproach us with deceiving ourselves with vain words, and with not being sufficiently confident; but the first of your assumptions is to say that the absolute is a combination of contingents. In your intemperate desire to destroy metaphysics, you shake the most unrefutable and indispensable of all mathematical axioms.

If your doctrine could be proved to be true, it would supply a formidable argument against reason and liberty. After struggling for so many ages to win the privilege of free thought, it would leave us nothing after this life, nothing beyond the passing world! A noble triumph, to acquire the right of universal disbelief! A legitimate object for so many efforts, so much genius, and so much blood! A great additional strength, a valuable remedy, and a wonderful consolation for human nature!

No: sceptical philosophy is not philosophy. There is much to do in studying and cultivating the world; let these positive minds confine their energies to this complicated task, and they will render nothing but service to humanity. But when they proceed to the length of denying all reality except what they can touch with their instruments; when they propose for sole and universal truth, the narrow corner of truth that they are able to explore; they become, not our benefactors, but our enemies. Every step they move in advance, is marked by a disaster. They take from us our imagination of the ideal, which supplies a foretaste of future reality, to enclose us within an actual reality, equally poor and

miserable; they forbid us to hope, by limiting our destiny to the career of the body, the end of which is foreseen and inevitable. If they leave us the name of God, it is only by an illogical confusion which consists in identifying the cause with the effect. The word duty is, in their definition, synonymous with contract, and consequently with calculation: whence it follows that absolute devotion becomes folly. Their science is a negation in theory, a dissolvent in practice. On the other hand, spiritual philosophy opens a new world to man; bestows on him a father; teaches him to endure life with its casualties; and to love his fellow-creatures. The moral lesson to which it gives birth is that of duty and sacrifice. It consecrates law, but ennobles law by love. It establishes liberty, but gives fraternity as its companion. Positive science reduces man to the individual, and spiritual philosophy tends to make all human nature a single family.

There is an exclusive class of sceptics, founded, not upon philosophical, but upon political conviction. They have witnessed the revival of superstition and intolerance, and have, with good reason, thought that it was necessary to oppose a strong barrier against these double enemies of civilisation and liberty. But they have not contented themselves with attacking superstition and intolerance: they have made war upon a doctrine which had degenerated into superstition, upon a Church which had become intolerant; and not only upon this Church and doctrine, but upon spiritualistic philosophy, the metaphysics of which are entirely impregnated with Christianity.

Let us not feel surprised that those who use philosophy as a weapon of war, lose the true sense of the philosophical method. It is to the truth of a proposition that we ought to look, and not to its origin. If spiritualism is true, we ought to be spiritualists, no matter what may be the errors of its disciples; and if Christianity is true, we ought to be Christians, whatever may be the

mistakes which fanaticism shelters under the name of Christianity. Can it be that truth shall cease to be truth, because it happens to be taught by our adversaries? Is it possible that a doctrine could no longer be salutary in itself because it happens to be abused and perverted by some of its professors? We have seen, in politics, the melancholy example of parties alternately shifting from side to side, solely for the sake of opposition. What can philosophy have in common with such dishonest and puerile diplomacy?

I confess, there is not a single friend of philosophy, who does not feel himself wounded and grieved by the crusade which, during the few last years, has been carried on against liberty and civilisation. But they must have little faith who are disturbed for the consequences of this outbreak. For myself, if I may be permitted to make this declaration of my personal feelings, justified perhaps by the virulence of certain controversialists, I hold, without difficulty or doubt, to the point I had marked out for myself before these attacks commenced. I remain firm in my convictions of rationalist philosophy, steadfast also in my profound reverence for the Christian religion, immoveable in my resolution to contend on all occasions and at any sacrifice, against intolerance. I examine conscientiously what there can be contradictory in this profession of faith, and I can discover nothing. Without offence to the sceptics and Voltairians, whom I have no desire to misrepresent, to oppose intolerance is not to question christianity.

There are two kinds of intolerance,—ecclesiastical, and civil intolerance. Ecclesiastical intolerance is that which compels all the followers of a Church to believe what that Church teaches; civil intolerance obliges all dissenters to make an external profession of a faith which they repudiate in the depth of their souls. The first is merely a moral act, and only addresses itself to conviction; the second employs violence, and has recourse

to the secular arm.* Ecclesiastical intolerance, in a church, results from belief in revelation; civil intolerance, in a clergy, proceeds from their pretensions to universal authority. The one is purely religious, the other exclusively political. To resist civil intolerance is to defend liberty of conscience, and to perform the most rigid duty of all who assume the name of philosophers. But ecclesiastical intolerance does not of necessity produce civil intolerance. They are derived neither from the same cause nor the same principle. Illustrious examples have often demonstrated to the world that a jealous solicitude for orthodoxy may be perfectly compatible with Christian charity; and we should despair of human nature if persecution were the necessary and inevitable companion of faith. My horror of theocracy and intellectual thraldom, my opinions upon the independence and authority of human reason, leave me therefore entirely free to express my admiration and respect for the Christian doctrine. I teach in the name of reason, and I endeavour to propagate the truths that Christianity inculcates in the name of revelation. If it becomes necessary to defend liberty of conscience, I shall be ambitious of combating in the foremost ranks; if war is declared against Christianity, neither the insults of my enemies, nor the anger (perhaps more difficult to bear) of my friends, shall induce me to question a doctrine that proclaims the unity of God, Providence, spiritual existence, liberty, and the immortality of the soul; and the moral perfection of which is summed up in these words; "Do unto others as you would they should do unto you;" and "Children, love each other."

I can understand perfectly that the enemies of free thought

* "The proceeding of God, who disposes all things with gentleness, is to establish religion in the mind by reason, and in the heart by grace. But to seek to place it in the mind and heart by violence and menaces, is not to establish religion but terror:"—*terrorem potius quam religionem.* Pascal, *Thoughts*, Art. xxiv. 3, ed. Havet. p. 205.

and the partisans of theocracy, give me no credit for my reverence for the Gospel. Do I not know this by experience? We may pity to the bottom of our souls, those who raise objections of this nature. They are unacquainted with liberty. They are incapable of judging the heart of a philosopher. I much suspect that a great number of the Voltairians of to-day are the same who, in 1848, compelled the Catholic clergy to bless the trees of liberty, and spoke of nothing but the alliance between democracy and the Gospel. It would be sad for philosophy to depend on these shifting currents of opinion, when its task, on the contrary, is to restrain and regulate them.

I acknowledge humbly that I felt a scruple before publishing "Natural Religion;" but it was a scruple of a totally opposite character. This work, which some regard as an ambitious attempt, is, under a very well known name, often employed even by illustrious writers, a kind of popular summary of the most universally adopted tenets of the spiritualists. In collecting together within such a limited compass, the doctrines which I believe to be profoundly true, do I not run the risk of weakening the respect they inspire? And is there not danger in taking this decided step of renouncing hypotheses, to confine myself exclusively to what is received and undisputed? in insisting as strongly on the limits of reason as on its authority? and in recalling, finally, with perfect sincerity of attention, the great problems which reason leaves unanswered by the side of those which she has so gloriously solved? After mature reflection, I have satisfied myself that the truth ought always to be told, that nothing is gained by surrounding it with false greatness, and that there can be no risk of paralysing the efforts of those who still seek after knowledge, by placing before them in a more accessible and popular form, the doctrines already established.

A positive religion, whatever may be its source, divine or

human, is called upon to solve all problems which concern the future of the human race. Such is not the province of philosophy. Its first duty is to rest upon substantial evidences, and to know and confess its proper limits. On these conditions only can it assume the character of a science. It is not, and never can be, what is called a perfect science, for it will always have something to search for and discuss. Progress, and indefinite progress is its law. There are problems which, in all probability, philosophy will never clear up; there are others, of the solution of which it has already caught a glimpse; and there are still more of which at present it can only lay down the terms with exactitude. Philosophy ought neither to dissemble the wants of society nor the boundaries of reason. To pretend to knowledge that it does not possess, to conceal or deny the hopes that it cannot realise, is equally fatal to its dignity and influence.

If we look with attention around us, we may convince ourselves, in spite of assertions to the contrary, that the human soul finds within itself a strong necessity of being united again to God. Nature urges us to dream of, to enquire after, and to long for, the invisible world. As long as man continues to be man, he will desire to be a spiritualist. This is, in some measure, his vocation. Scepticism satisfied with itself, and erected into a system, constitutes an actual rebellion against common sense.* But if spiritualism is so much in the ascendant, that which prevails most in our present profoundly agitated social system, is a vague, ill-defined spiritualism, uncertain of itself, without fixed principles or established faith. Perhaps the fault lies with the philosophers

* "There are only three different kinds of persons: the first, who serve God, having found him; the next, who are occupied in seeking for but have not yet found him; and the last, who live without either seeking or finding him. The first are rational and happy; the last irrational and miserable; those of the intermediate class are wretched and rational."—Pascal, *Thoughts*, Art. xxiv., Ed. Havet. p. 330.

of the doctrine themselves. It is the vice of reason to exalt itself in the consciousness of its own strength. When once we give ourselves up to our own guidance, we find it difficult to acknowledge that there are spaces into which the light of reason cannot penetrate. We wish to attain the knowledge of all that it is desirable to know. Alas! it is not by our insatiable desires, but by the weakness of our practical faculties and instruments that human acquirements ought to be measured. These aspirations towards problems which are beyond our range, gratify some minds as tokens of strength. They love the dizziness and confusion in which they become involved. After all, what do they prove, beyond our impotence to restrain our own intelligence and our own desires? In proportion as the first truths we are enabled to discover, are clearly and conclusively demonstrated, so in the same degree we are unwilling to confess that other truths can only be suspected or imperfectly perceived. To sound dogmas we add conjectures. We wish to impose with equal authority scientific tenets, and systems inevitably obscure, because they are based only upon dreams. We envelop ourselves in clouds to obtain credit for hypotheses, which, presented in barren nakedness, would excite only astonishment and compassion. We take circuitous routes to beguile ourselves with the illusion of having made decided advances. We replace ideas by formulas. We forget the celebrated saying of Socrates, that the first knowledge is to feel convinced that we know nothing; or rather, scarcely more than nothing. We wish to be, at all costs, profound and original, when we ought to think only of being true and useful.

Another serious mistake of the spiritualists is contempt for the mass of mankind. They wish to reason and philosophise amongst themselves. Why do they not converse in Latin, as in the fifteenth century? Let them beware lest they experience the lot of all aristocracies, which dissolve and shiver to pieces in their own

isolation. If we wish to serve or elevate humanity above its present condition, we ought to live in communion with our fellow men. Plato exhibits to us vulgar minds enchained in a cavern, and mistaking for realities the indistinct shadows which a pale glimmer occasions to appear at the end of their dungeon; while by an effort of love and thought, the philosopher escapes from this confinement, and breathes again the light of life and liberty. But when his philosopher has lived for a time in this superior world, Plato takes him again by the hand and leads him back to the cavern, to instruct, to cure, and to console the captives. It is thus that he acknowledges and practises the double mission of philosophy; to discover and to disseminate truth.

If I could venture, after having shown that the disciples of what they call practical philosophy deceive themselves as to the very foundation of the science they profess, as to its privileges, interests, and future; that they persevere in a war without utility, and in many respects without justice; that they amount, in fact, to a mere negation, which is, if possible, less than nothing;—I should then address myself to my friends and masters, the philosophers of spirituality, and conjure them to come into close contact with the necessities of the weakest minds amongst our fellow creatures, to reduce their own standard so as to be understood, to become humble, to be true, to speak to the hearts of the multitude, not, unhappily, to charm, but to awaken them. There is no longer a pretext for illusion. The scene which we have immediately before our eyes is too real and too melancholy. There has ever been in our land an overwhelming number of indifferent and lukewarm spirits; but not long since, the sacred fire was still burning. Our youth crowded the halls of the Sorbonne. In proportion as the course of instruction was more severe, the more directly it reached the heart. A new doctrine was hailed with enthusiasm. The great labours of history had their exclusive

world, who listened with ardour and wrapt attention. Political opinions were divided; but the struggle was preferable to extinction. Even art itself operated as a sermon. What has become of the time, so near and yet so remote, when people rushed to the first representation of a new play, as to a battle? Now, we are all sunk in one universal apathy and degeneration. No one is active except in the pursuit of self-interest. Everywhere we see luxury without riches; minds incessantly devoted to play; all France speculating on the rise or fall of the funds; the telegraph employed to carry on stock-jobbing; money taken from agriculture and thrown into the gambling-houses. The most productive enterprises discredited, ruined, and utterly put a stop to by strokes on the exchange, even before the works have had time to commence. In the midst of all this, no zeal for studies that bring no pecuniary profit, for letters, for theoretical sciences; no great school to excite and elevate inquiring minds; no traces of moral instruction; the fine arts depreciated, and without influence; characters effaced, taste degraded, manners corrupted, and hypocrisy esteemed. Does not this state of things move us to tears? Must we stagnate and rot in the mire? Is there no remedy to be found? Let us hope and firmly trust that the wound by which we are stricken is not mortal. History shows us many examples of these decays followed by a brilliant resuscitation. It is only necessary that those who fully understand and groan under the evil, should also comprehend the vast extent of their duty. It is the heart that is gangrened, and the heart that calls for cure. Let us bring back the hopes of life to the disinherited; virtue and faith to the dead; rouse up on all sides the sentiments of right and duty; and establish a new system of stoic virtue to act as a rampart against another fall. For myself, if any reflection encourages and animates me, it is that I have not been silent in this general degradation. If, as I fear, my

efforts are barren in themselves, may I at least excite a more efficacious philosophy! The standard of spiritualism would be better held by another hand, but it is under that standard that we are all called upon to rally.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST FRENCH EDITION.

NATURE, society, and conscience, speak to us of God at every instant. What is this God the thought of whom incessantly recurs to us? Is he a solitary deity, indifferent to, and estranged from the world he has created? Does he require our reverence and our prayers? Has he given us a law and subjected us to a trial? Does he reserve for us another existence after the present? As we advance along the road of life, our relatives, our friends fall on every side of us. We consign their bodies to the earth, but whither do their souls depart? Are we for ever separated from the dead? Is there nothing beyond the grave?

Christianity supplies an answer for all these questions. It teaches man his origin, his rule of conduct, and his end; in a word, it tells him all that is necessary for the guidance and consolation of life.

Many minds repose with happiness in this secure light of revealed faith. But there are others that hesitate to admit the principle of revelation; or being unable to believe all the truths taught by the Church, (while they fully comprehend that we cannot separate portions of the divine word, but must accept or reject the whole,) imagine themselves called upon to give up positive religion, and fly without reserve to philosophy. Those who seek to reduce religion to the authority of reason, will they find in reason all that they require? Have the human faculties no intermediate resource between revelation and scepticism?

Is there nothing beyond the circle of revealed truth which can reconcile earth with heaven?

I know that natural religion is often treated as a chimera, and that the impotence of philosophy is exaggerated when we read the accounts of so many idle disputes, of so many systems alternately flourishing and overthrown; but important truths spring up from this mass of errors, as a vigorous tree flourishes in the midst of ruins. We are ill-studied in the history of thought, if we conclude that Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, and Leibnitz, when dying, left philosophy at the point where they took it up. Natural religion is not a system attached to any particular school; it consists in two or three simple but sublime dogmas, bequeathed to common sense by the science of all ages.

Much has been written in demonstration of the existence of God. Such arguments are for the most part irrefutable; but are they necessary? This may be questioned. In point of fact, there are very few atheists, even if there are any at all. We may forget God, we may adopt false ideas of his attributes, but we cannot deny him. It is sufficient to open our eyes, the visible world speaks; or, better still, we have only to think, for our reason, while in progress of development, elevates itself towards God by an invincible attraction. If reason fails, my heart is filled with him. I can neither suffer nor enjoy, without recognising in myself the consciousness of his presence. He is my support and my hope, the foundation of my intelligence, the star of my love and my desire. But if I acknowledge him in his benefits and promises, I am unable to understand him in his peculiar essence. The nature of infinity is beyond the grasp of my imperfect powers. God has made me to incline towards him with all the force of my intellect, my affection, and my will, but he has also decreed that I am to remain for ever in immeasurable inferiority. The first word of philosophy should be to proclaim that

God exists; the second, to avow that he is incomprehensible. What we know of him is all that is required to teach us how to love and adore.

The human mind reluctantly acknowledges a limited range. It aspires to comprehend God, and verges on a depreciation of his omnipotence, while setting up a self-delusion. It ascribes to him our feelings, passions, and necessities; and, to complete the inconsistency, invests him with a power resembling the faculties of man—a simple power of transformation. This human creator can no longer create; he has passed into the substance of the world: such is the origin of Pantheism. Sound sense equally rejects the conclusion and the principle: it acknowledges neither a God analogous to man, nor identical with the world. Pantheism is nothing beyond a mere scholastic term for atheism: the deified world is a world without a deity. An ideal humanity cannot be the unknown source whence springs at the same time, by a blind concurrence, every thing that is good and all that is evil. It is against reason to pretend that evil is the necessary expression of perfection.

Pantheism takes God from us by confounding him with the world; another doctrine removes him by pretending that he has no sympathy with his work. It is undoubtedly difficult to understand that what is perfect in its essence, and all-sufficient in itself, should condescend so far as to think of us: but we know that God has bestowed thought on us, seeing that we are made by him, and creation assures us of Providence. Why should God detach himself entirely from his own work? He neither renounces his plans, nor checks himself in their accomplishment, like an unskilful artificer. This attempt to impose a separation between the action of creating and that of governing the world, forms a part of the constant illusion by which we seek to reduce omnipotence to the conditions of our own being. God is eternal; he does not last for

a given time; he forms no unconnected series of designs; he embraces with the same momentary and extended will, the establishment and administration of the universe. We are compelled to separate what in him is blended, because our weak intelligence, of which the horizon is limited and the ideas consecutive, can neither think nor speak but by the help of analysis.

Thus, there is above us, a God by whom we are made and controlled. What place has he assigned to man in the great scheme of creation? To ascertain this, we have only to examine ourselves; for God has formed nothing without an express purpose, and proportions the means exactly to the object he has in view. All other beings are merely parts of a whole; man alone is a centre; he knows himself and his relative position, he is aware of his strength, and uses it freely. This of itself is a guarantee of immortality, for the life which God has bestowed on man has nothing in common with that of inferior creatures ignorant of their own nature, without responsibility, and who have nothing to expect after they have completed their task of a day, or have given place to other individuals of the same species. For my own part, I feel convinced that my immortality cannot be indifferent to God, since it is not indifferent to myself. My mind is evidently constructed to reflect on what is durable, permanent, eternal; and my heart is, as it were, intoxicated and possessed with admiration of the infinite. I am free under a prescribed law; that law when I examine it has all the characteristics of infallibility and eternity. It belongs to another world, with which it connects me. It imposes on me continual sacrifices, which proves that it has not been ordained with a view to this life only, and that my present existence is but a state of probation. When I am once impressed with the conviction that we are placed here below for a struggle, and that we are expected elsewhere for the reward, I despise suffering, and endure injustice without a murmur,

because I believe in a future state as devoutly as in duty and providence. There is between these three leading tenets such an inseparable and connected responsibility, that I cannot accept one to the exclusion of the others. I believe, therefore, from the sole light of reason, that God is my creator; I believe that during this life, I must fulfil the task he has allotted to me, and I hold that after death I shall be rewarded or punished accordingly. Such is my faith.

Filled with this conviction, I am insensible to solitude or despair. God watches and expects me. I behold the invisible world through the eyes of my understanding. In this state of transition I may be crushed; it is but the suffering of a day, for which I shall be repaid a hundredfold. I know that the career of virtue is painful, and that vice and sometimes crime contain the elements of success. I demand nothing from the world but the opportunity of contending and deserving. My repose, my country, my God, belong to another sphere.

But how can I deserve? By obeying the law and doing good. My law is to preserve and develop my faculties, to bear good will towards, and lend assistance to my companions under the same trial, to love and adore the author of my being? I shall be asked, how can I worship God? Have I not a prescribed duty? To do good is to adore. To love, to work, to practise self-negation, is to worship, to pray.* I can thus raise my thoughts and my heart towards God, and thank him for his mercies.

Such are natural religion and natural worship. They lie in this small compass, but they embrace all for those who can penetrate it. My object is to expound this doctrine, in the present work, with simplicity, but at the same time with force; to recapitulate the most solid arguments which establish Providence and the immortality

* See Note on Prayer, at the end of the volume.—EDITOR.

of the soul, and to show how we can become the masters of our own future, by a proper exercise of the liberty with which we are intrusted; to reply to serious objections, and to cast aside sophisms; to render, by force of perspicuity, science itself accessible to the most homely understanding, from which it often differs in nothing but in a more abstruse form. I also wish to distinguish with a firm hand, that which we can understand, from what is beyond our comprehension; for it often happens that pride carries us beyond the reach of human intelligence, and we become lost in problems which defy solution. But, above all, I am anxious to inspire a certain class of saddened and despairing minds with a true sentiment of religion, without which there can be no agreeable or binding obligation, no fraternal society, no really solid virtue. If I can reanimate a fainting hope, revive a failing courage, reassure a trembling conscience, console or pacify a suffering heart, I shall believe that these humble pages have not been entirely written in vain.

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PART THE FIRST.

THE NATURE OF GOD.

CHAPTER I.

REFLECTIONS ON THE PROOFS OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

"Every thing which is born must necessarily proceed from something else; but it is difficult to find the author and father of the universe, and impossible, when he is found, to render him intelligible to all the world."—*Plato's Timæus*, translated by V. Cousin, t. xii. p. 117.

THERE are beyond doubt, in the present lamentably unsettled state of society, men who live without thinking of God. They neither deny nor question that he exists; they simply forget him. Exclusively devoted to their own worldly interests and passions, they are occupied in the enjoyment of life, and in banishing the idea of death. To whatever length the tragedy may be prolonged, the catastrophe always comes upon them by surprise; and the last hour finds them filled with the thoughts and love of those sterile possessions which are about to be snatched away for ever. These indifferent sensualists do not comprise the majority; a great proportion of mankind believe firmly in the existence of God. Too often their faith is neither active nor fortified by reflection; they do not examine themselves on their tenets, and could scarcely explain them if called upon; in the practice of life they proceed as if they were void of faith, but they recover themselves, if we may so express it, under solemn circumstances. They may be seen to pray upon a tomb or over a cradle. Although they do not, with the philosophers, explore and inhabit the invisible world, they know and feel that such a world awaits them, and is their true inheritance. The name of God rises naturally to their lips in necessity and suffering. They have a confused perception that

God is the originating principle of all morality and knowledge, and that to give up this fundamental truth is to plunge into scepticism and deliver the soul over to annihilation.

In seeking for the causes which give predominance to this salutary belief, we may assuredly enumerate the influence of religion, education, and philosophy; but we must at the same time admit that there are implanted in the mind and heart of man a secret instinct, and a natural impulse which draw him towards God. The spectacle of the world instructs us; the afflictions of life, while they demonstrate our helplessness, compel us to look for a comforter; and enjoyment itself, in a generous, noble nature, gives rise to sentiments of gratitude and piety. The longer we live, the more deeply are we impressed with the impossibility of admitting annihilation; and with the necessity of believing that there is a God above who regulates everything,

Fortified, without our own consciousness, by the events which have left their traces upon our souls, this belief in the existence of God becomes at last an imperceptible portion of our nature. We feel it to be so essential and irresistible, that without reflecting or comprehending, we repose upon it with confidence and security, as a child relies on the love and protection of a father.

It is satisfactory to reflect that this conviction and confidence are to be met with, in equal force, through every class of society; that all nations, divided as they may be upon other points, are in accordance upon this; that religious faith precedes civilisation, and is assuredly its original institutor; that travellers never discover a new tribe without finding amongst them at least the elements of some rude worship; and that history, ascending to the earliest periods, always presents to us God associated with the first thoughts and feelings of man. The inherent faith which we acknowledge within ourselves, and which develops and increases with the intercourse of life, encounters an analogous faith on every side, in the external world. This community of belief and sentiment renders human nature a single family.

Since the age of Plato, who has reasoned on the existence of God in his *Timæus* and *Laws*,* and that of Aristotle, who has demonstrated the divine essence in the twelfth book of his *Metaphysics*, the schools have handed down a certain number of formal

* "How can we, without indignation, behold ourselves reduced to prove the existence of God? We are compelled to regard with anger, and even with hatred, those who have been, and are still, the causes that have forced us to this."—*Plato's Laws*, book x. (translated by V. Cousin.)

arguments, which have been successively amended, and which, renewed, as we may say, by Descartes and Leibnitz, comprise, at this day, the basis of instruction. These arguments are full of force, if we consider above all other points the principle on which they chiefly rest, and which embraces incontestable truth; but in arrangement they are neither solid nor efficacious. The propositions are sound, but the reasonings are feeble. They will never convert the soul of an atheist, and are insufficient to fix hesitating and unsettled minds. Let us pass them summarily in review, on account of their historical importance, without deceiving ourselves as to any advantageous result. Their inutility will console us for their weakness. We know that certain dispositions feel the necessity of reasoning on their faith, of verifying it by argument, of sifting its tenor, of examining its consequences, of separating it from all that appears obscure, incomplete or paradoxical; but to arrive thus at the power of transforming an instinctive and impulsive belief in the existence of God into a philosophical dogma, requires a long series of study and persevering meditation. The habit of finding God everywhere, as the inseparable foundation of all truth and reality, renders our faith equally specific and animated. Such an effect cannot be expected from two or three syllogisms. Arguments rapidly run over to arrive at a logical conclusion, are insufficient to reassure and convince. We strive in vain to admit their solidity; the mind is startled and checked by the greatness of the result. We require a longer road, and more time to collect our powers of reflection, until we become accustomed to the splendour of divine majesty. We believe, by an invincible instinct, in the existence of God; but to establish our faith upon fixed rules, demands the fullest extent of human science.*

When Descartes undertook to demonstrate the existence of God through a regular formula, he was driven to the task by the predicament in which he had voluntarily plunged. In order to divest himself of all contradictory prejudices derived from education, and to abandon every opinion of which he could not distinctly estimate the origin and value, he made a plain tablet of his mind, and swept from it every point of faith which he had previously adopted. This extended scepticism, the object of

* "The metaphysical proofs of God are so far removed from the reasonings of men, and so involved, that they strike little, and when they impress some, it is only on the first instant of demonstration; an hour after, they fear they have deceived themselves."—*Pascal, Thoughts*, art. 10, edit. Havet., p. 156.

which was not to cease to believe, but to re-commence belief upon superior reason and authority, is what has been denominated "Doubting according to method." Descartes escaped from it by this remark,—that he could doubt of everything, except only of his doubt, and consequently of his thought and being. Saint Augustine, before him, had uttered precisely the same opinion. "I am certain of my existence," says he, in his treatise *De Civitate Dei ;* "in this I cannot be accused of deceiving myself, for even to deceive myself, I must exist."* Being convinced of his existence, Descartes demands of himself what he is, and answers, that he is a living being endowed with thought. This reflection leads him to examine the different ideas which present themselves to his mind, and the first that arrests his attention is that of perfection. What is this idea? Is it a pure chimera? Or does it apply to some object actually existing? It is thus that Descartes finds himself led on from the first step of his philosophy to demonstrate the existence of God.

"I conceive," says he,† "the idea of a perfect being: now, I am not myself a perfect being, because I doubt. I possess many other ideas, such as those of heaven, earth, and animals; but I may have formed these myself, for there is nothing in them which I cannot draw from my own nature by means of analysis or composition. But perfection is something so far beyond myself that I am unable to form any notion of it from the imperfections with which I am acquainted. God, therefore, exists."

We may develop, or, to speak with more exactness, we may detail this demonstration, as follows:—

I possess within myself the idea of God; that is to say, the idea of the infinite: how is this?

It can only be from one of these two reasons:—

Either because infinity exists, and it thus becomes perfectly natural that I should possess the idea; or that infinity does not exist, and I have myself formed the idea I conceive.

Now, is it possible that I could myself have originated the idea of infinity which I feel within me?

* "Prius abs te quæro utrum tu ipse sis: an tu fortasse metuis ne in hac interrogatione fallaris, cum utique si non esses, falli omnino non possis?—Mihi esse me, idque nosse et amare, certissimum est. Nulla in his vero academicorum argumentorum formido, dicentium; Quid si falleris? Si enim fallor, sum; nam qui non est, utique nec falli potest; ac per hoc, sum, si fallor."—Lib. ii. *De Libero Arbitrio*, cap. iii., et lib. ii. *De Civ. Dei*, cap. xxvi.

† *Discourse upon Method*, part iv. Third Meditation. *Principles of Philosophy*, part i.

I have only two ways of forming an idea of an object which does not exist; either by attenuation, in suppressing through power of thought some of the qualities of an actual object; or by amplification, in uniting under the same idea the qualities of many objects.

The infinite cannot be an attenuation of the finite; neither can it be an accumulation of finite qualities; for a great number of finite things can make no more than a great number of finite things; they cannot expand into a single infinite. The difficulty is not removed by supposing that if I conceive a finite being, setting aside all that limits it, I ascend thus to the notion of infinity. This is to fall back into the hypothesis we have just rejected; for if we cannot produce infinity by combining together an indeterminate number of finites, neither can we do so by multiplying for an indeterminate number of times any given thing which is finite in itself.

It follows, therefore, that I cannot conceive the idea of infinity except upon the sole condition that infinity exists.

This demonstration is equally solid and simple. But, unfortunately, it only addresses itself to those minds who are convinced that the idea of infinity is inherent in their nature, and has not been produced by a combination of several other ideas. Now, it necessarily follows, that all those who reason from the senses must agree on the first point, and that their theory consists precisely in denying the second. Thus, the proof of Descartes has no value except for philosophers, who least of all require that the existence of God should be proved.

After the foregoing demonstration, he laid down another much more complicated, which we may sum up in the following manner:—

I exist, and I possess within me the notion of a God;* I am, therefore, not the author of my own being; for if I were, I should have given myself all the perfections of which I have any idea, having already assumed the most difficult of all acquired things—substance. But if I conclude that I have always been what I am now, still that does not enable me to dispense with an originating cause; for the duration of defined substance is only the uninterrupted repetition of the act by which it has been produced. To have recourse to my parents, or to any other cause less perfect

* *Discourse upon Method*, part iv. Third Meditation. *Principles of Philosophy*, part iii. sects. 20, 22.

than God, explains nothing, as I must define such a cause as I define myself, I cannot imagine an infinite series of successive causes, for I must find not only a cause which produces, but one which preserves,—consequently, an actual, identical cause. Several distinct causes, therefore, have not contributed to my formation, each adding a specific perfection to the idea I entertain of the general perfection of God; for unity and simplicity form the leading characteristics which I attribute to him. Thus, by my existence and the idea of God implanted within me, the existence of God can alone be proved.

We recognise in this demonstration the intellectual vigour with which Descartes preserves the chain of a proposition, and the exact enumeration of every point of an hypothesis. Nevertheless it does not entirely satisfy the mind, and all who read it will be arrested by some assertions which at least are open to contest.

Thus, for example, when Descartes says, "If I had been my own creator, I should have given myself all the perfections of which I can conceive the idea, because it is less difficult to have given these perfections than to have given substance," this mode of expression is, to say the least of it, inconsistent, since the mind cannot implicitly adopt the conclusion that it is more difficult to give substance than perfection. As we are unable to comprehend clearly what it is to bestow on ourselves substance, or to give perfection, we can scarcely decide between these two incomprehensible difficulties, which is the most incomprehensible. Descartes might have said in a more simple form, that the being who exists by his own will, if such a being does exist, must of necessity be perfect. The proposition thus laid down, would seem to be beyond dispute.

The same result applies to the conclusion that the duration of substance is merely continued creation; whence Descartes decides that, being imperfect, we not only require a cause which has made, but also a cause which preserves us, and, consequently, a perpetually acting cause. After all, it is most true, that having no other reason to be, beyond the will of the Creator, we require no other reason for continued being; but, on the one hand, Descartes has awkwardly complicated this simple idea of a theory of continued creation; and, on the other, if we admit the necessity of a preserving cause to continue our being, such an admission includes an acknowledgment of the existence of God, and the demonstration becomes superfluous.

Finally, the last assertion of Descartes, that unity and sim-

plicity form the leading characteristics which the human mind attributes to perfection, will undoubtedly be admitted by the rationalists, but warmly contested by other philosophers. Whence it follows, that the greater part of the propositions, of which this argument consists, possess the fault of rendering the rest of the demonstration useless, if once they are admitted; and the still greater fault of being only admissible by philosophers of the rationalist school.

We find again, in the "Discourse upon Method," and the "Meditations," a third demonstration of the existence of God, which is no other than the celebrated proof known under the name of *The argument of Saint Anselm*, and which consists in concluding directly the existence of God from the *idea* of God.* This argument may be thus laid down, according to Saint Anselm, Descartes, and Leibnitz:—

I have within myself the idea of God, that is to say, of a perfect being, of a being endowed with all perfections.† Now, existence being a perfection, I cannot without absurdity suppose that a perfect being does not exist.

It requires a great effort to understand this argument in its extreme brevity. We shall give in succession the formula of Saint Anselm, that of Descartes, and the improved one of Leibnitz.

"It is impossible," says Saint Anselm,‡ "to think that God does not exist; for God is, when defined, such a being that we cannot conceive one superior. Now, I can conceive a being whose existence it is impossible to disbelieve, and this being is evidently superior to one whose non-existence I am capable of imagining. Therefore, if we admit the possibility of supposing that God does not exist, there must be a being superior to God; that is to say, a being superior to one, than which we cannot conceive a greater—which is absurd."

While examining this proof in the fifth "Meditation," Descartes has explained and strengthened it. "I cannot," says he, "conceive a mountain without a valley, nor a right-angled triangle of which the sum of the three angles is not equal to two right

* "The most beautiful, the most exalted, the soundest and best proof of the existence of God, that which supposes the least, is the natural idea we have of the infinite. For it is certain that the human mind recognises infinity though it cannot comprehend it."—*Malebranche, Research into Truth*, book iii. part ii. chap. 6.

† *Discourse upon Method*, part iv. Fifth Meditation. *Principles of Philosophy*, part i.

‡ *Proslogium*, cap. iii.

angles; in like manner, I am unable to imagine God without existence, for existence is a perfection, and God is the sum of all perfections." "It might be objected," he continues, "that if I cannot conceive a mountain without a valley, this does not prove that there is either a mountain or a valley, but simply that one cannot exist without the other; and, in like manner, if I cannot conceive God without existence, because God is perfect, this does not prove that God exists, but merely that he could not be perfect without existence. Now, this objection is specious, not solid, since it is existence itself, and not any other specific quality, which is inseparable from our idea of God. I am as incapable of conceiving a God without existence, that is to say, a being supremely perfect, yet wanting a supreme perfection, as I am free to imagine a horse with or without wings."* Enlightened minds have judged that this reasoning cannot be attacked. Leibnitz endeavoured to improve it by anticipating a possible objection.† According to him it is thus peremptorily demonstrated that if God is possible, he is necessary. Everything consists in establishing that the simple definition of God implies the existence of God; above all, that it is indispensable that God should be defined, that he should be proved to be possible, or, in plainer terms, that the idea of a perfect being should not embrace a contradiction. Leibnitz, therefore, imagined he had given to the argument of Saint Anselm the utmost degree of severe perspicuity, when he expressed it under the following formula:—"The being whose essence implies existence, exists, if it is possible; that is to say, if it has an essence. (This is an axiom of identity, which requires no demonstration.)

"Now, God is a being whose essence implies existence. (Through definition.) Therefore, if God is possible, he exists. (By the sole force of the idea we conceive of him.)"‡

Must it be confessed? This argument appears more subtle

* Descartes has summed up his argument under the following form, in his *Answer to the Objections of Father Mersenne*:—"To say that a particular attribute is comprised in the nature or conception of any given thing, is to say exactly that this attribute is a true component of that particular thing, and that we are convinced of its being so. It is also to say, necessary existence is comprised in the nature and conception of God. Therefore, it is right to conclude that necessary existence is in God, or that God exists."

† *New Essays on the Human Understanding*, book iv. chap. x.

‡ "Ens, ex cujus essentia sequitur existentia, si est possibile, id est, si habet essentiam, existit. (Est axioma identicum demonstratione non indigens.)

"Atqui Deus est ens ex cujus essentia sequitur existentia. (Est definitio.)

"Ergo Deus, si est possibilis, existit. (Per ipsius conceptus necessitatem)."

than sound; and without the respect inspired by such names as those of Descartes, Bossuet, Fenelon, and Leibnitz, we should venture to say that it resembles a sophism. This last word naturally suggested itself to the pen of Descartes while he was writing.* The improvements added by Leibnitz are not very encouraging. He is undoubtedly right in declaring that if by some contradiction or impossibility, the idea of perfection should prove to be in itself a chimera, we could not conclude from the presence of such an idea in our own minds, that the object of it actually existed; but, on the other hand, it seems difficult not to admit that if the presence in our own minds of the idea of perfection does not prevent us from supposing the impossibility of perfection, still less does it prevent us from conceiving its non-existence. The error of this argument lies in its having a reality for conclusion, and an abstraction for principle. It is true that we conceive God to be perfect; it is true that existence is a perfection; it is, therefore, equally true that we conceive God to be existing at the same time and in the same manner that we conceive him to be perfect. Now, in what manner do we conceive God as perfect? When I say, "I conceive a perfect being," that means, "I conceive that there is, or that there may be, a perfect being." In like manner, when I say, "I conceive that a perfect being exists," I mean to imply, "I conceive that there is or may be a perfect being, and that such a being could not be perfect without the condition of existence."

Descartes, who foresaw this objection, maintains that we do not conceive the existence of God as simply possible, but as absolutely necessary, "considering that God exists through himself alone, and that that which exists by its own power must exist for ever."† This conclusion may be classed with nearly all the preceding arguments. It is true, but the reasoning applies to the conclusion alone; which means, that here again there is no reasoning, and Descartes has only once more affirmed the philosophy of the rationalists.

* "Although in truth this does not appear at first entirely manifest, but seems to bear some semblance of sophism."—*Fifth Meditation.*

† "If we carefully enquire whether existence accords with an omnipotent being, and what sort of existence, we shall be able clearly and distinctly to ascertain, in the first place, that, at least, possible existence may be one of his suitable attributes; and secondly, because we cannot think that his existence is possible without at the same time knowing that, as his power is infinite, he exists through his own will, we must therefore conclude from thence that he actually does exist." See *Answer to the first objections, Answer to the second objections*, and, above all, at the end of these *Answers*, The *Demands of Descartes.* (Fifth Demand.)

If now, including in a single glance all the different arguments we have gone through, and disengaging them from their syllogistic form, we endeavour to explain what gives them, in spite of their logical weakness, a real value which the most sceptical mind is compelled to bow to and acknowledge, we shall find it is the constant presence of the following affirmation so incessantly repeated under every possible form. "It is evident that the infinite exists; it is absurd to suppose its non-existence; nothing opposes the existence of the infinite; if the infinite is not, nothing is possible; while, on the contrary, everything is possible on the condition that the infinite exists." This is not an argument; it is a principle, an intuitive conviction, if so it may be called, a self-evident truth. Remove this from our perception and we shall be no longer capable of thought. It is precisely because this principle is the foundation of thought, that it cannot be reduced to a logical demonstration. To demonstrate is to rest a truth upon an antecedent principle: therefore, all principles may be demonstrated with the exception of those first principles which serve for the demonstration of others. What we have to deal with here, is not to introduce into our minds a belief in the existence of the infinite, but simply to establish that the belief is already there. The authors of the arguments we have recapitulated have only erred upon a question of method.

If instead of having had recourse to the scholastic form, which seems more in its place in the *Proslogium* than in the "Meditations," Descartes had confined himself to saying that the human mind in considering perfection, comprehends that it must exist by the necessity of its nature, while, on the contrary, it acknowledges that an imperfect being can only exist upon the condition of having been produced by some extraneous cause, this principle, which forms the whole point of the argument, must have been received with conviction. Bossuet has adopted it in his "Elevations." "Why," says he, "should imperfection exist, and not perfection? Or rather, why should that be which contains the elements of nonentity, and that not be which has no particle of annihilation? . . . My soul, who art endowed with the faculty of reason, but whose reason is so limited, why dost thou desire to endure, and how canst thou believe that God does not? Alas! art thou superior to God? Weak, ignorant, and misguided soul, full of doubt and error in thine intelligence, overflowing with ignorance, wandering, corruption, and evil desires, in thine own will, can it be that thou shouldst exist, and

that certainty, comprehension, the boundless knowledge of truth, and the immutable law of justice and rectitude should not exist?* . . . Tell me, my soul, how dost thou understand nothingness, except by being? How dost thou feel privation except by the distinct something which is taken away? How dost thou conceive imperfection, except by the idea of the perfection from which it has fallen? . . . There must be perfection before there can be a fault; before irregularity there must be something essentially regular, and which being inseparable from its own nature, can neither fail nor err."†

Spinoza reasons after the same manner: "Nothing," he says, "either in God or out of God can establish any obstacle to the existence of God. There cannot be a square circle, because the nature of such a figure is contradictory, and a circle cannot exist without a cause, because its nature is not essentially necessary; but God, on the contrary, cannot be without existence, because he is self-sufficient, and there is nothing in his nature which can render him impossible."‡

In speaking thus, Bossuet and Spinoza merely repeat the argument of Descartes, of which they neglect, or, as we may almost venture to say, of which they disdain the form.

Descartes, whose genius was essentially metaphysical, has intentionally omitted the demonstration drawn from the visible universe, and from the necessity of a perfect cause which explains its existence and harmony.

* First Week, first Elevation. † Second Week, second Elevation.

‡ "We ought to be able to assign a cause or reason for everything, to explain why it does or does not exist. For instance, if there is a triangle, there must be a reason or cause why it is there. If the triangle does not exist, still it is necessary to show a reason or cause which either opposes or destroys its existence. Now this cause or reason must be found either in or out of the nature of any given thing. For instance, the reason why there cannot be a square circle is comprised in the very nature of the thing, which implies a contradiction. . . . On the other hand, the reason why there should be either a triangle or a circle does not lie in the nature of these figures, but in the order of bodily nature taken entirely; for it must result from this order, either that the triangle already existed of necessity, or that it is impossible that it should continue to exist. These principles are self-evident, and from these we conclude, that a given thing necessarily exists when there is no cause or reason which prevents its existence. But we cannot find, out of the divine nature, any cause or reason which prevents its existence, and it is therefore absurd to imagine a contradiction in a being absolutely infinite and endowed with sovereign perfection. Let us conclude, therefore, that neither in God nor out of God is there any cause or reason which destroys his existence, and consequently that God necessarily exists."—*Spinoza's Ethics*, part i., second proposition. Translation of M. Emile Saisset, vol. i. pp. 13 and 14.

This demonstration includes three parts, or rather divides itself into three distinct demonstrations.

First,—It establishes that the matter of the world requires a cause; for how could it subsist of itself, seeing that it is the most imperfect, and in some respects the least real of all existences? Therefore, the existence of matter proves the existence of a Creator.

Secondly,—It proves that matter left to itself is inert. It undergoes, receives, and transmits motion, but cannot produce it. Therefore, everything in matter that has power and organisation comes from an exterior cause; consequently there must be an originating mover of matter.

Finally,—An argument is drawn from the universal harmony of motion and being. Not only is it impossible for matter to exist or move of itself, but its movements, if they were, as has been supposed, the consequences of a blind necessity, would be capricious and disorderly, instead of being replete with beauty, proportion, and regulated force. There must, therefore, be a controlling intelligence which has conceived and carried into execution the plan of the universe. There is a Providence.

This triple, or, if the phrase is preferred, this single demonstration (for the whole question lies in tracing back the existence of the world to a cause), is the most popular argument on the subject, the most frequently employed, and the most readily admitted. It embraces all the resources of oratorical art, and addresses itself, perhaps, quite as powerfully to the imagination and feelings, as to the reasoning faculties. It has the merit of accustoming us to seek especially, in the study of phenomena, the law by which they are governed, and to look upon all laws as the different formulæ of a single and undivided principle.

But the misfortune of this argument is, that if it proves invincibly what it undertakes to prove, it does not establish all that is necessary. The God who has made the world is unquestionably powerful and intelligent, but does he possess infinity of power and intelligence? Between a God simply capable of making the world, and a perfect God, there is still an infinite abyss. We perceive, here below, beauties and perfections in vast number, but we find also abundance of disorder. The induction which concludes the perfection of the Creator from the greatness of his work, does not supply any explanation of the evil that exists in the world. One point alone of the argument could give us a glimpse of the divine perfection—that which touches upon

creation. But the world is a bad road through which to arrive at creation, for creation has no analogue.

This proof, or one exactly similar, has been elaborately discussed by Samuel Clarke, in his "Treatise on the Existence of God," which excited the somewhat excessive admiration of Voltaire. Clarke handles the same materials, and writes with the abrupt inelegance of Spinoza, but without his genius. He arranges an interminable series of axioms and syllogisms, sometimes to prove that the world is contingent; at others, to establish that it exists necessarily as an infinite and eternal essence. The whole winds up with a conclusion that perfection cannot be produced by a combination of all imperfections; so that, by a different path, Clarke falls into the error of Descartes, and merely repeats over and over again, under a syllogistic form, the fundamental proposition of the rationalist schools.

We merely mention, for the sake of record, another argument peculiarly belonging to Samuel Clarke, and which Leibnitz has considered worthy of a reputation. This is it; "Infinite time and infinite space are not substances; they are therefore attributes; consequently there must exist an infinite cause and subject to which infinite time and space belong." *

This conclusion is not only denied by the sensualists, but by the rationalists, who equally agree in rejecting these two chimeras of time and space, which Clarke endeavours to establish as the attributes of God.

Finally, a very beautiful and simple proof of the existence of God (beautiful on account of its simplicity), has been drawn from the existence of axioms, or self-evident truths. The reasoning may be thus conveyed: Since there are certain self-evident and eternal truths, and that the distinctive mark and object of any truth is to be understood, it follows that there must be an eternal intelligence, by which these truths are eternally comprehended. Consequently, God exists.†

* The origin of this demonstration of Clarke is to be found in the celebrated phrase of Newton: "Durat semper, adest ubique, et existendo semper et ubique, durationem et spatium, æternitatem et infinitatem constituit."—God endures for ever and is present everywhere; by this continued being and omnipresence he constitutes time and space, eternity and infinity.—*Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica*, lib. iii. schol. gen.

† "All these truths, and all others that I deduce from them by a sure process of reasoning, subsist independently of time. If I inquire now, where and in what object they exist, eternal and immutable as they are, I am compelled to admit a being in which truth is eternally subsisting, and by whom it

We shall not inquire whether it is possible to suppose an indefinite series of finite intelligences, by means of which, axioms could be understood throughout interminable ages. The argument which concludes from the existence of eternal ideas, the existence of an eternal intelligence, and consequently of an eternal being, seems perfectly solid and convincing for all who, with us, admit the necessity and eternity of axioms. As a general question, it appears extremely easy to demonstrate the existence of God to the rationalists, because they cannot set him aside for a single moment; or rather, it is unnecessary to enter into the demonstration with them, for his existence is implicitly contained in all their doctrines. The rationalists never go beyond the major of these propositions, because that suffices to convince them; and the other philosophers stop there equally, because they reject it.

Such are the formal proofs of the existence of God, which are of sufficient importance to be pointed out, and which, under various forms, fill the treatises of philosophy wherein it has been endeavoured to reduce to the authority of a syllogism this fundamental truth, without which nothing can be true. Fenelon has summed them all up with much force and eloquence, in his *Essay on the Existence of God*. Thus collected together, in a body of doctrine, they impress the mind as something serious and weighty. We readily discover certain objections; we hesitate a little on particular details; but we comprehend, on the whole, that any thesis contrary to that of the author must be inadmissible. The priest and preacher are visible behind the philosopher. Fenelon is one of the first writers in our language, who possesses the rare gift of passing from a familiar simplicity of style to the most florid oratory, and from the scholastic severity of logic to the most touching effusions of tenderness. His book, which is exclusively a reflection of his heart, is a grand and beautiful work, where ignorance may find method and perspicuity, and whence the whole world, learned and unlettered, may extract noble emotions. Such a lecture, considered with attention, is equivalent to a prayer. Our conclusion may be easily foreseen. Fenelon will be read with delight; but we shall derive from his volume edification rather than incentives to faith.

is eternally understood: and this being must be truth itself, and entirely composed of truth."—*Bossuet, On the Knowledge of God and Ourselves*, chap. iv. sect. 5.

We admire in Descartes, in Leibnitz, and, in a lesser degree, in Clarke, a strong and solid train of thought; but their proofs are insufficient for unbelievers, as they all rest on the impossibility under which we find ourselves of conceiving the idea of God, without an inspiration from God; an impossibility, which the rationalists alone confess: * and for the rationalists they are useless, because if the idea of God is in us, as they believe, without our having formed it ourselves, it is clear, before all demonstration, that God exists.

We incline to think, that instead of adopting any particular formula, which must be ever open to discussion; and which, argued as it may, will never appear a sufficient base for such an important point of faith, it would be wiser to "approach philosophy with this salutary reflection, that we are entering into the temple of truth, which only manifests itself to sincere inquirers;" and to examine successively every section of which science is composed, without dwelling too much on first results, and without expecting to arrive, all at once, at the solution of the most important and intricate problems. When we seek God thus, we may be sure to find traces of him at every step. We comprehend, from the outset, that he exists, without forming a distinct conception of his attributes: but, in proportion as during the gradual development of science, we find him always as a necessary conclusion to every new theory, we gather from this study unexpected light upon the nature of him who is the cause of all substance and all law. We accustom ourselves to contemplate God while first studying him in his works; like children, who being unable to look on the sun, seek for its reflection in a stream.

Do you desire to know if there is a God? Study the world; or, if the world is too extended, study man. Every thing within us bears testimony to the existence and omnipotence of the Deity.

Human form is single in principle, but triple in its manifestations. To live, is to think, to feel, and to desire.

What is to feel? Is it merely to experience sensations of pleasure and of pain? We have here but the first indications of sensibility. To these ephemeral phenomena something is

* Descartes was well aware that he reasoned exclusively for the rationalists. "I have several times protested," he says, "that I decline arguing with those who appeal to the imagination and not to the understanding."—*Answer to the Five Objections.*

attached more grand and enduring—our affections. In what do they originate? Does the external world bring them, or do they spring from the heart, as from a burning centre, to expand themselves upon all that surrounds us? If love came from without, why is not the same cause equally attractive to every one? Whence could proceed the varieties of feeling between cold and impassioned temperaments? How could we then comprehend so many lofty sentiments excited by unworthy objects? Or that magic of affection which creates in the subject of its worship the beauties it admires? Or those souls born for love, who, finding nothing on which to concentrate an exclusive attachment, perish of an unknown disease, victims of their own richness and of the poverty of the world? The same hand which, in the seed of a plant, has disposed the mysterious power which draws the roots towards the earth, and elevates the stem above the soil, to expand itself in fruits and flowers, has fixed in the depths of the human heart a love of eternal beauty, which inclines us to all that is good and perfect, by a secret and controlling analogy. What is this sentiment, this innate perception of the beautiful and the good, without which we should be incapable of love? What is this beauty towards which the entire heart springs, and which we adore, by reflection, in the glorious creatures in whom it is manifested? Is it not infinite, eternal, and perfect beauty? And this boundless love, is it not one of the ties that connect us with God?

The faculty of intelligence soars, perhaps, even above that of feeling. To think, with ordinary minds, is to distinguish the form, the size, and the weight of bodies; to calculate the degree of muscular force required to displace a mass; to foresee that a necessity will arise at a particular part of the globe for conveying thither, at a precise moment, the merchandise which has been called for; to buy and sell with relative convenience; to balance expense and profit; in a word, to concentrate human understanding upon this one point—the preservation and nourishment of the body. We have no occasion to go further or ascend higher; for even to accomplish such a restricted end, how great is the mechanism of human understanding? Must it not conceive laws and necessary affinities between different things? Does it discover those affinities in the things themselves, the inevitable in the contingent, the right in the act, the law in that which submits to the law? If it be true that the visible world does not contain the law, here is in itself the first

intuition of the invisible world. But let us approach the latter by another road. Let us examine the objects which surround us, this narrow horizon, by which we are compressed. We only touch what is close to us, or literally within reach; we only see distinctly for a few paces: at a given distance everything disappears and escapes. Let us fly from this prison, since we can remove ourselves, painfully and slowly, by natural means, but with extreme rapidity by the aid of mechanism. To enjoy expansion, let us travel one thousand or two thousand leagues, or make a tour of the globe. We shall thus introduce into our minds the idea of extended spaces, which we can only look upon in succession, but which we are able to conceive by a single notion. In fact, we do not even require movement to comprehend space; imagination suffices; and, by its aid, we can figure to ourselves, as in a dream, the dimensions of the entire world. But the world comprises little, although it would take a man's life to visit it all: we know that it is merely an atom in the immensity of the universe. Let us travel in thought from star to star; let us figure to ourselves those vast bodies, more extensive than the earth, separated by boundless intervals, and more numerous than the sands of the sea. When we have accumulated together all these wonderful and multiplied existences; and when, to describe them, we have exhausted the resources of language, and the powers of calculation, we still feel within us a propelling force which urges us onward, beyond the real, the possible, and the imaginary. What must we conclude from this? That we cannot conceive a space which is not contained within another. And whence arises this impossibility? Is it the limited extent we are capable of conceiving which impresses it on our minds? Is it this bounded atom which brings with itself immensity? Is there not in the idea something originating in ourselves, which, instead of resulting from the senses, is directly opposed to them? If we quit space for durability, we find at the end of our double analysis an identical conclusion. If from time and space we pass to motion, or multiplication, we still recognise the same progress towards the infinite, the same necessity of conceiving something which goes beyond what we can derive from the senses and the power of imagination. We call this indescribable something by different names, according to the path by which we have been led towards it—immensity, if we were following space; eternity, if we were on the track of time; immutability, if we were pursuing motion; and unity, if we recurred to multiplication. But this

immensity, eternity, or immutability, is merely one identical idea under various names—the idea of the infinite. If we examine this idea in itself, and demand what it includes, we shall find it always necessary, entire, and indivisible, while the world is ever contingent, changing, moveable, and shut up on every side within narrow limits. We are forced to acknowledge the perpetual opposition of these two ideas. We are compelled to conclude that we have within us an idea which neither the world, nor the faculties with which we analyse it, can explain, and that this idea is the idea of infinity, which the Infinite can alone produce.*

Human liberty studied in its true depth, carries us directly to a conception of the infinite. What is liberty? The power of making or of not making. By this endowment, instead of being subjugated, like the rest of creation, we become masters, and are responsible for our own destinies: a mighty privilege, which gives us the present, and assures us of the future. But can this liberty subsist without rule? Liberty without restraint would fail to elevate, but must degrade the possessor. If we were alone in the world, without law, we should be vain and futile beings, indifferent to the order and system of the universe. Liberty is not bestowed to raise us above the law, but that we may obey the law in full knowledge of the cause. In this consists the power of human freedom and the strength we derive from it. Given up to itself, it would destroy us; subjected to an immutable law, it becomes the instrument and distinctive mark of our superiority. What is this law? Whence does it proceed? From the world, which has no liberty, and is in itself changeable, and controlled by necessary regulations? No—the law of moral government comes neither from man, nor society, nor the world. It existed before man and will endure after him. Man may outrage but cannot abrogate it. Human society may forget, deny, despise this law; if the present world were destroyed, the next creation would still obey it. Liberty is changeable, but justice is absolute. Our sentiments, our actions, our thoughts are transitory, but beauty, goodness, and truth are eternal.

Thus, psychology, logic, and morals combine in producing a conviction of infinity. They tend towards it incessantly by every analysis and by all theories. They assist each other in this

* "Insinuavit nobis Christus animam humanam et mentem rationalem non vegetari, non beatificari, non illuminari, nisi ab ipsa substantia Dei."—*D. Augustinus, In Joann.* tract. 23.

common work, which produces their unity by a unity of object and end. We may almost define philosophy in all its branches, a method of arriving at the infinite by the study of the finite.

All philosophy is full of God, and all the sciences are full of philosophy. Are you studying mathematics? What is size? Reflect a little deeply on this question; size will lead you by contrast to the idea of simple, single substance. Everything in the world is commensurable; but measure is nothing. You must seek the being, the reality, the truth, and consequently the cause, in that which cannot be measured—in the immoveable. Are you engaged in writing history? Why are certain nations alternately raised and subdued, and wherefore are these revolutions and catastrophes? Do we find in any given series of events, merely an empty spectacle, or the progressive realisation of a thought? Perhaps you are deeply immersed in jurisprudence. Law, on the surface, appears nothing more than a compilation proceeding from human will; but pause a little before you adopt this conclusion; behind these forms of man's invention, strange and ephemeral as they often are, you will perceive the image of a necessary and inevitable law. You will see and feel that if the written law is subject to change, there exists beyond it an immutable, independent, and eternal law, constituting at the same time the condition and sanction of human liberty. Are you a physician? Search for the first voluntary movement in your body, and tell us whence it comes. It is in vain that you are encompassed by matter: your bones, your fibres, your anatomical texture are inert: they are subject, in common with all bodies, to physical laws, and equally so, with all living bodies, to physiological conditions. Where then is the spring which gives them spontaneous motion? It escapes from all your efforts and instruments; yet, nevertheless, there it is in positive existence, the impenetrable mystery of life, the final secret which laughs at science, the initial force which attests the presence of creative Deity. Physician, when you study the law of motion,—chemists, while you are decomposing bodies, explain to us, if you can, what are causes, movement, extension, and particles—the primary and irreducible qualities of matter. You hesitate between a dynamical and a mechanical theory; but whether it be force or law, whence comes the originating impulse? from what does the first regulated plan emanate? The study of nature throughout every department of her extended kingdom brings us back to God by the infinitely little and the infinitely great. He stands forth as a cause at the

beginning of all, and as a foundation of universal harmony at the end of all. Human life itself, with its joys and sorrows, is one prolonged demonstration of the existence of God. We recognise him at every instant in our thoughts and feelings. What we comprehend of ourselves teaches us to know him, and what we cannot understand still enhances that knowledge.

We have thus given a brief indication of the manner in which philosophical enquiry should be conducted, so that collective science may concur in rendering irrefragable the dogma of the divine being. Assuredly, there is here no new demonstration; who could dream of producing a new demonstration of the existence of God? Still less is there any attempt at a new form of demonstration: on the contrary, we have gone back to the most ancient, the simplest, the most familiar, and (for that reason) the best of all forms—meditation in place of reasoning. A syllogism is good as a summary, or in an argument, when it becomes necessary to cut short an opponent; but let us not undertake to prove the existence of God by such a rapid process. Let us take time to think over and penetrate his nature; and for this express purpose, let us select the most circuitous roads. After all, we cannot conclude that he exists from any one specific evidence, but we perceive him in the evidence of all things. We have only to learn how to look about us. Well regulated reflection will give us so much light, that the presence of God will shine forth in all our actions, thoughts, and sentiments.

We must, therefore, take up knowledge at its source, and from the first word, without intermission, in every principle, and in every observation, we must show the infinite as he develops himself; sometimes in producing the love of that love with which he has inspired us; at others, in supplying a rule for our judgments, an ideal for our thoughts, and a star for our desires. God is the corner-stone which cannot be shaken without overthrowing the entire building, and of which, by a necessary consequence, the firmness of the edifice establishes and proves the immutable and eternal solidity. Let us not complain that we have to travel on a lengthened path, for we shall not lose our time, even though it should be necessary to consume life in the journey. This is our appointed course; the rest is merely an episode. Happy is he who believes in God, through natural grace, without so many subtle disquisitions, and who only seeks in science a confirmation of his faith! But for the sceptic, it will not suffice to refer him to two or three syllogisms.

It is related of Diderot, that hearing, on a particular occasion, the ordinary scholastic proofs of the existence of God expounded, he became a sudden believer; and, in the warmth of his enthusiasm, ran to seek a philosopher, one of his intimate friends, that he might induce him to participate in his own recent conversion. He met him in a printing-office; opened the subject, detailed his arguments with the intemperate fervour by which he was ever characterised, but encountered a mind utterly closed against conviction. Diderot persevered, appealed to the heart of his listener, and urged him with the most impassioned expostulations; he considered his friend lost by his atheism, depicted his miserable condition in glowing colours, and implored him with tears to become a convert. The other remained unshaken, replied to all the arguments, refuted and turned them into ridicule, restored the equanimity of the zealot, and concluded by extinguishing his fire and new-born faith. The apostleship of Diderot lasted only for an hour. His belief was destroyed as rapidly as it had been conceived, and he came out of the enquiry a more obstinate unbeliever than ever. If this anecdote be true, it does not prove that the demonstrations of the schools are bad in themselves, but it teaches us not to attach much value to such sudden revolutions of opinion, and to judge how little can be expected from an isolated faith which has only a few logical arguments to oppose to the obscurities and deficiencies of thought, the thousand objections of the incredulous, the difficulties of life, and the fears of death. He alone has a true faith who accustoms himself to live with God in heart and meditation, to find him at the end of all his researches, to include him in all his hopes. Let us accept no demonstration of the eternal existence of a supreme being, except one so overpowering, and so completely interwoven with our convictions, that it cannot disappear from the mind without leaving behind it solitude and despair.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE INCOMPREHENSIBILITY OF GOD.

"It belongs to the nature of the infinite, that I who am limited, cannot comprehend it."—*Descartes, Fifth Meditation.*

"It is contradictory to suppose that I can comprehend a given thing, and that what I can thus comprehend should be infinite; for to have a correct idea of infinity implies that it cannot be understood, and the more so, since incomprehensibility is included in the explicit definition of infinity."—*Descartes, Answer to the Five Objections.* On the Third Meditation, sect. 3.

"The intellectual world, without excepting geometry, is full of truths, at the same time incomprehensible and indisputable; because the reason which shows that they exist, cannot actually touch them, as we may say, across the boundaries within which they are restrained, although it perceives that they are there. Such is the dogma of the existence of God."—*J. J. Rousseau, Letter to D'Alembert on the article Geneva.*

THE first requirement of thought after having satisfied itself that God exists, is to demand what are his attributes?

God is the cause of the world; he is, therefore, an eternal and necessary being. He has produced the world; he has therefore known and willed it, and comprises within himself, enlightened will. As his own substance contains the reason of his existence, his understanding depends on no other being, and his will can neither be impeded nor limited in its exercise. From the same cause, the power directed by this will is absolute. This power leads to creation; the reason or intelligence, to truth; and the will, to good.*

God is infinite in his being, in his understanding, in his goodness, in his power; for if he were not infinitely infinite, or, in other words, perfect, he would cease to be necessary, and consequently could not exist at all. Further, there is but one God, for a single God being necessary, a single one only is possible. Finally, God possesses perfect happiness, for he has in himself his own cause and intent. To these attributes which our reason can discover, we join others in unlimited number, which having

* *Leibnitz, Essays on the Goodness of God,* part i. sect. 7.

not even a remote analogy to what we are able to comprehend, remain, of necessity, beyond the reach of our thoughts. When we consider God in his relations with the world, we call him the Creator; by which we mean that his will suffices to explain the existence of the matter and phenomena of which the world is composed; we speak of him as the King, implying that he disposes all things for the best with unlimited power; and we denominate him the Father, for being all sufficient in himself, he can only be influenced by love in producing and governing the creatures he has made.*

There have been in all ages, and especially in our own time, philosophers who believe that they advance science by concealing its limits; and who after having demonstrated God with the certainty of a proposition in geometry, undertake to enumerate and describe his attributes, as if man were capable of possessing a clear and complete knowledge of the divine nature.

Our individual philosophy is less ambitious. Humiliated by the magnitude of what we cannot discover, rather than intoxicated by the little of which we are permitted to acquire an imperfect glimpse, the first word we utter in speaking of God is that of incomprehensibility.

This word is offensive to human pride, and, if it must be confessed, equally so to philosophical pride. It is readily accorded that any particular religion may speak of the incomprehensibility of God, and the whole world knows that the Catholic faith proclaims a deity both hidden and incomprehensible; yet it seems that the direct aim of philosophy is to explain all mysteries, to render all our ideas distinct and defined, to carry into all things the light of reason, and to accustom the mind to believe nothing that it cannot prove and thoroughly understand. It might be said that the well-known dictum of Bayle, "Comprehension is the measure of faith," has become the adopted motto of philosophy. To believe without proof, or to believe without comprehending, appears merely to express, under two different forms, the abdication of reason.

Such common-place conclusions break down under examination. The very essence of philosophy undoubtedly consists in

* Ἀγαθὸς ἦν, ἀγαθῷ δὲ οὐδεὶς περὶ οὐδενὸς οὐδέποτε ἐγγίγνεται φθόνος. Τούτου δ' ἐκτὸς ὢν, πάντα ὁτιμάλιστα ἐβουλήθη γένεσθαι παραπλήσια αὑτῷ. "He was good, and he who is good, has no particle of envy. Free from envy, he has willed that all things should as closely as possible resemble himself." *Plato, Timæus* (translated by V. Cousin), t. xii. p. 119.

believing nothing without proof; but when once the existence of a being is proved, are we to renounce our belief in that existence under the pretext that the nature of the being is incomprehensible to us? If after having demonstrated that God exists, we could arrive at a thorough comprehension of his nature, we should then say, not only that we know that God is, but that we know what he is. If, on the contrary, after having demonstrated, we find that we cannot comprehend him, we ought equally to say that we know he exists, but that we are ignorant of his nature.*

These data are so simple and natural, that while we reflect on them we feel a difficulty in explaining to ourselves the pretensions to omniscience assumed by certain schools.† We agree with Locke and Leibnitz, that to estimate what God can do by what we are able to comprehend, is either to give an unlimited extent to human understanding, or to limit the attributes of Divine power.‡

It is necessary, moreover, to render very distinct what is intended to be conveyed by the words, "divine incomprehensibility." We do not mean to say, that there is anything in the nature of God contrary to reason; neither is it implied that there is absolutely nothing in the divine essence which reason cannot understand.§ "I can touch a mountain," says Descartes, "although I am unable to embrace it." God is not contrary, but superior, to reason. He is incomprehensible, but not entirely inaccessible to human understanding.

To comprehend that anything is contrary to reason, and at the same time to admit its existence, is to renounce both reason and philosophy; to comprehend that anything is above reason, is only to acknowledge that there are limits to reason and philosophy.‖ If we were to say that God is entirely inaccessible to reason, or, in other words, that we know nothing of him whatever,

* "We can readily understand the existence of any given thing, without understanding its nature."—*Pascal, Thoughts*, edit. Havet. p. 145.

† "It seems strange that they should have desired to understand the principles of all things, and thence to arrive at universal knowledge by a presumption as infinite as their object."—*Pascal, Thoughts*, edit. Havet. p. 8.

‡ *Leibnitz, New Essays*, book. iv. chap. x.

§ "When God is pronounced an incomprehensible being, this applies to a full and entire conception of his nature, which embraces and includes all that is in him; and to that indifferent and imperfect conception which is in us, but which, nevertheless, suffices to satisfy us that he exists."—*Descartes, Answer to the Second Objections.*

‖ *Leibnitz, New Essays on the Human Understanding*, book iv. chap. x.

beyond that he exists, we should render all our reasonings useless by making them end in a term which expresses nothing to satisfy the thought; but we can recognise certain attributes and acts of God, without therefore assuming the right to assert that we comprehend his nature. The Catholic creed, which admits the incomprehensibility of God, declares at the same time that he is infinitely good, infinitely intelligent, and infinitely powerful; that he has created and governs the world; and yet no one has ever charged this against the Catholic creed as a contradiction.* Let us dwell a little on this point, so strongly contested and so imperfectly understood.

Can human intelligence explain all things?

It is manifest that it cannot. In principle, the mind of man is limited; consequently its perceptions are also limited. We see around us, on every side, realities which we are unable to explain. We may quote them by hundreds, as they are ready at hand, equally incomprehensible and familiar.

Can the human mind admit facts to be true which are incomprehensible? It both can and must. If we see a given thing, we are compelled to believe in its existence, whether we may be able to explain it or not. It is the same with anything that we prove without seeing it: for from the moment that it is proved by clear and convincing reasons, we are no longer capable of denying the force of these reasons. Nothing is more common than the necessity of admitting a fact, while we renounce the attempt to account for it.

Some affect to confound the incomprehensible and the contradictory. The distinction is, however, topical, and leaves no room for scepticism. We may not penetrate the possibility of the incomprehensible, but we clearly comprehend the impossibility of a contradiction. When it is demonstrated to us that an opinion we have delivered is inexplicable, we reply, that it is because reason is limited: when we have proved to our opponents that an opinion adopted by them is contradictory, we have a right to say, the opinion is false.

That which God has given us for our internal guide, is in truth a portion of reason; therefore, whatever reason denies or affirms,

* "We love God because we know him; but we adore him, because he is above our comprehension."—*Gregory of Nazianzen, Discourse* xxxvii. No. ii. tom. i. p. 616. "*Qu.* Can we thoroughly know God? *Ans.* No, he is incomprehensible in his nature, in his perfection, in his designs, and in his works."—*Bossuet, Catechism of Meaux.*

is well denied or affirmed. But he has not gifted us with consummate reason; consequently there are things above our comprehension, and which divine intelligence alone can fathom.*

Here is a first proposition: Paul left Paris at mid-day, and arrived at Versailles five minutes later. I am unable to comprehend the possibility of such speed. Now, here is a second proposition: Paul left Paris at mid-day, and arrived at Versailles five minutes earlier. I at once understand and affirm the impossibility of such a miracle. Human science is entirely grounded on these subtle distinctions. At every instant we exclaim with humility, "I do not comprehend," and with assurance, "That is impossible!"

Is God the only being whose existence we affirm, and whose nature we are unable to comprehend? Has it never happened, for example, in the physical sciences, that a phenomenon has been established long before the explanation is discovered? Are there not at this very moment universally admitted phenomena, which no one has yet accounted for, and which appear likely to remain for ever inexplicable? If then, in nature itself, which means in what is necessarily limited and imperfect, we recognise the existence of positive mysteries above the power of human reason to solve, by what aberration can we suppose that absolute perfection has not depths beyond the reach of human thought?†

What is to comprehend? We do not thoroughly weigh the value of this word—it says much. I am almost the master of what I comprehend; I penetrate its hidden meaning. Anything that I understand is no longer obscure. I can describe and explain it; it is, at least, brought down to the level of my faculties.

To comprehend an argument, is to seize the connecting link which unites its different portions into one. But what is to comprehend a being?

Let us consider a watch: every one knows that a watch is a machine intended to produce a regular movement. To know this is merely to know that there are watches: but to understand what watches are, we must follow the motion from the hand to

* *Leibnitz, Discourse on the Conformity of Reason and Faith.*

† "Incomprehensibility does not prevent us from believing natural truths; for instance, we do not comprehend the nature of odours and tastes, nevertheless we are convinced by a species of faith, that these perceptible qualities are inherent in the nature of things; and that they are not illusions."—*Leibnitz, Discourse on the Conformity of Reason and Faith*, sect. 41.

the spring, we must investigate the action of all the wheels, and we must convince ourselves that the multiplied movements proceed from a single originating movement, as conclusions arise out of their principles.

But do we comprehend this first movement which causes all the others? Do we also understand the transmission of movement from one body to another? Without going so far, do we comprehend the movement itself? I know that it is there; I am familiar with its operation, which excites no astonishment in my mind; I am not accustomed to ask myself in what it consists. All this is true, and it is equally so, that after having described this movement (which is almost always easily done), I am unable to explain, and still more unable to comprehend it.

With a certain class of men, to explain is precisely the same as to describe; with others, more instructed, it is to generalise; with another section, still more intelligent, it is to connect the effect with the cause. But this does not amount to comprehending, and no one will ever comprehend why a particular cause produces a particular effect. It is much to know that it does produce the effect.

We may, if we are so disposed, contemplate the spectacle of human ignorance in human science.* A physician who sees the fall of substances, will with reason believe himself much better informed than the ignorant multitude, because he is aware of the affinity or connection between the swiftness of movement and the mass that moves. What is this affinity? A generalisation, and consequently a fact, but not an explanation. To explain the fall of a body, after having measured and described it, we must have recourse to the hypothesis of gravitation and attraction. The discovery of this hypothesis is an instance of genius, but after all, attraction is still only a proved fact, with which other facts are connected. Why does this attraction exist? What is it? We cannot tell. We discover, we affirm, but we are unable to comprehend it.

The same argument applies to chemistry. To find simple bodies again in complex bodies, and to compound complex

* "Positive religions insist on the belief of mysteries. This means, in fact, that the incomprehensibility of a tenet is not a sufficient reason for its rejection: not to comprehend a tenet is simply not to perceive the possibility of its object. No one comprehends the reproduction of organic matter, and yet no one refuses to believe it."—*Kant, On Religion within the Limits of Reason*, part iii. *ad finem*.

bodies by the aid of simple bodies,—such is, under its double form, the wonderful science of chemistry. The world believed formerly that there were only four elements; chemistry has discovered simple bodies under these pretended elements. But what are simple bodies? This is precisely what chemistry cannot understand. It may describe and define them, but it cannot comprehend their nature, for it knows not the nature of a substance, a quality, or a movement. When philosophers venture in their reasoning beyond the visible phenomena of composition and decomposition, when they speak of atoms, simple forces, first and secondary qualities, and inseparable attributes, they confound many ingenious ideas with a host of extravagant conceptions, and merely succeed in showing that they live in the midst of bodies without being able to comprehend what bodies are. An argument even more conclusive is furnished, if we take man himself, to prove to man that he does not comprehend any one of the beings of whose existence he is thoroughly convinced, with whom he lives, and whose description and history fall under his daily notice.* When I wish to explain the movement of my finger, I follow the motion of the muscle to a certain material centre from whence that motion has commenced. Can I comprehend this transmission of movement? Not more than I can deny that it is there. Let us admit, to obtain a solution, that there is an analogy between this successive motion and certain mechanical laws: we thus arrive at a generalisation and a comparison, but nothing more. Is it not strange to believe that we comprehend a particular thing, because we have discovered that it is analogous to another given thing which we do not comprehend? The exclusively material phenomenon of the transmission of motion is therefore, as far as we are concerned, an unexplained mystery. But what is this mystery in comparison with what now follows? Not only does the movement extend throughout the entire length of the muscle, but there is in this muscle, a first point, which moves itself, without being set in motion by anything else? This is not, in truth, an effect without a cause, but a material movement pro-

* "Assuredly the soul has no distinct idea of its own nature and composition. It cannot discover by examining itself whether it is capable of such and such modifications, which it has never experienced. It is truly sensible to pain, but knows not what it is; neither can it determine how it has been constructed to suffer pain, or to endure one particular pain more than another." —*Malebranche, Research into Truth*, book iv. chap. ii. sect. ii.

duced by an immaterial will; a power directly exercised by the soul upon the body. Who comprehends this, or who can hope that it ever will be comprehended?* Profound philosophers have wasted their time in trying to explain the action of the mind upon the corporeal system, by the absurd theory of animal intelligences. Even Descartes has not recoiled from the extravagance of this hypothesis. Such is the fate of human science when it ventures beyond the limits which God has prescribed for it.

It is quite as difficult to account for the action of the body upon the mind. We can analyse the eye to perfection; we can dissect the optic nerve and the brain; we can discover the laws of perspective; we can follow up an image presented to us, and explain all its characteristics; nothing can be more complete. And yet, after all, what is *To see?* What affinity is there between the image presented and the faculty of vision? What is *colour?* What is *form?* The fire scorches me. What is there in the fire which resembles the burn I suffer from? I am equally unable to comprehend the beings that surround me, the phenomena through which they manifest themselves, my own substance, and my individual faculties. I see, but I know not what seeing is. I touch, but I cannot tell what touching is. I suffer pain without being able to understand the cause. I am plunged in depths and encircled by mysteries. Unknown creations are on every side of me, and I am myself for ever inexplicable to my own intelligence. Yet, notwithstanding all this ignorance, I live in perfect self-complacency, I prate of science in pompous terms, and when I go so far as to demonstrate the existence of God, and am told that he is incomprehensible, I cry out and exclaim that I am insulted in my dignity as a rational being and a philosopher.

It is true that divine incomprehensibility possesses a character peculiar to itself: that of being an incomprehensibility more incomprehensible than any other. But this is no reason for denying the fact. The other existences which we are unable to comprehend possess some relative analogies: they cease to be strange to us, by appearing to be ordinary: we can estimate thoroughly their power, what that power can effect, in how much time, and according to what laws; we compare and classify them,

* "Modus quo corporibus adhæret spiritus, comprehendi ab hominibus non potest; et hoc tamen homo est."—*D. Augustinus, de Civitate Dei*, lib. xxi. cap. x.

which almost prevents us from thinking how they are to be comprehended. God, on the contrary, stands by himself alone. He has no analogies, he belongs to no class, he cannot be defined.* To speak of him would require a language composed of words inapplicable to created things. Principles themselves seem to change their nature when we trace them back to him, for he is the foundation of principles, the cause from whence all existences, external to himself, proceed.

Not only is there nothing repugnant to human reason in the dogma of divine incomprehensibility, but there appears while we reflect on it, a certain measure of folly in the contrary assumption. In actual life, there are many things which we comprehend at once, without difficulty; there are many more which require long and persevering study before we can master them; and there are others (as we have just shown), which we despair of ever understanding. And yet we would aspire to the comprehension of God! In science, as we advance by degrees, we find depths which we are unable to reach: weak minds alone believe that they can explain and comprehend everything. Is it possible that there can be any thing in the world inexplicable and incomprehensible, and that the Author of the world should not possess these attributes? We say of what we cannot comprehend that it is beyond our intelligence: what then can surpass our intelligence if not the nature of God.

It seems strange to hear the dogma of the divine incomprehensibility disputed by philosophers of the school of Descartes and Leibnitz. The ingenious and profound studies of the rationalists on the origin of our ideas, ought to be sufficient to set aside all attempts to fathom the nature of God. We shall endeavour to show this. Locke had maintained that we draw our idea of causation from notice of the external world. According to him, when a body in motion encounters another body to which it communicates its own motion, this simultaneousness, or succession of two movements, is not sufficient to supply us with the idea of causation; but if one of these bodies is our own, we are then very distinctly assured that our movement is the cause of the movement which we afterwards observe in a different object. Leibnitz was the first to demonstrate that this analysis is incomplete: for our movement, taken in itself and separated from the will by which it

* "Summum Magnum, ex defectione æmuli, solitudinem quandam de singularitate præstantiæ suæ possidens, unicum est."—*Tertullian, Adv. Marcion*, lib. i. no. 4.

has been produced, is nothing more in realty than an external phenomenon, known to us only through our senses, and agreeing exactly with the movement which follows it. The idea of a cause does not spring from the junction of these two movements, but rather from the coincidence between my own will and my personal motion. It is in perceiving this coincidence that I form the idea of a connection, which is no more than a simple link of succession. I see and feel that the internal act is the cause of my movement; I feel it, as it were, by sudden impulse, without experience or reflexion; I wish to move, before I know that I am capable of motion. I am so fully conscious of the power I exercise, that I feel myself master of my will whether to move or not; I can alter the direction or range of my movement at pleasure, and I can either increase or restrain its energy. If such is the origin of the idea of causation, it is clear that if I were not a cause myself, I could never acquire the idea of a cause. The world would present to me, in space, in co-existences, and in time, nothing beyond a series of consecutive order. I should see there co-ordination but not generation. I derive the idea of cause from myself, and I subsequently apply it to all other beings.

Now this idea, which I find in myself, is the simple idea of causation, although the identical cause perceived may be free, intelligent, and animated; and why should it not be so, since the simple idea of cause is comprised in the complex idea of a voluntary cause? Assuredly, I do not at first conceive the idea of a specific voluntary cause, and afterwards, by abstraction, the simple idea of causation; my thought does not proceed thus in the first act of consciousness; but we comprehend thoroughly that our intelligence can seize a simple idea in a complex phenomenon, by virtue of the axiom which common-sense has borrowed from philosophy, "He who can achieve the most can accomplish the least."

But we are not in a condition to reverse the proverb, and say, "He who can achieve the least can also accomplish the most." Are the causes of God's existence and our own identical? Does the Divine cause differ from the human cause only in degree? If we say so, it amounts to the audacity of declaring that God is useless. What signifies it that his power is greater, if he can only exercise that power after the same manner and in the same order? Reduced to the condition of a human cause in its highest exercise of power, God can move the world, but he is

unable to create it. The human cause produces the movement, and this is all. It modifies the being by the aid of the movement, but can do nothing more. The Divine cause produces and creates the being. This is a power of a nature entirely and radically different. We include under the same name of cause, the force which produces a being, and the power by which that being is modified: but it is evident that we employ one word to express two ideas; for, in the second case, we comprehend the term we employ, because it represents a human act; and, in the first, we utter an incoherence, for we speak of what we neither comprehend nor are capable of comprehending. It would be as easy to find the originating cause in the external world as in the created man.

It has been said by Voltaire, that "Ever since God created man in his own image, man has liberally repaid him;" and there is truth in this. We, nearly all, begin with the Christian idea of a God, the author of the world, and we end with the pagan notion of a deity resembling ourselves. We do not desire to comprehend that God has no analogy with us because he is our creator. All beings, God alone excepted, are portions of a system; this is their nature and condition; he only is beyond and above all systems. What is there in common between them and him?

When we apply the principles of our own nature to God, we run into contradictions; these principles emanate from him, but they constitute us entirely. When we attribute to God the faculties of man we find impossibilities; and the first of all, according to this conclusion, is the existence of the world itself.

The utter absurdity of this anthropomorphism is proved by the absurdity of its formulas. They require that God should be a man and at the same time eternal. They attribute to God all our human faculties, and add that they are infinite in him but limited in man. Thus, having a full comprehension of a human faculty which is terminable, they refuse to acknowledge the incomprehensibility of an infinite faculty. What, then, is this comprehensible infinity? If infinity is merely used to express immensity, God disappears; if it really means infinity, we amuse ourselves with vain words, and these human qualities, elevated to infinitude without becoming incomprehensible, evaporate in a confused phrase without any distinct idea.

Plato, Aristotle, the Alexandrians, and the great theologians of the Christian church, have directed philosophy on a totally

different course. They are so far from considering God analogous with the world, that their chief difficulty has been, not to separate him from, but to draw him nearer to, creation. In proportion as they conceive him to be perfect and immutable, they know not how to bring him down to the attributes of Providence. This same feeling of incomprehensible perfection is very strikingly expressed by Malebranche.* Perhaps a similar motive has induced Descartes to reject the doctrine of final causes. He denies us, equally, the power of comprehending God, and that of divining, in their ephemeral effect, the intentions of infinite cause. If, since his time, there has been a tendency to fall back into anthropomorphism, it proceeds from a certain decline in the metaphysics of the eighteenth century. The eighteenth century was signalised by daring, exact, practical, and experimental philosophy, which, while it opposed the remnants of scholastic theories, equally rejected the exalted metaphysics of Descartes and Leibnitz. From the former it has only adopted this leading maxim: to believe nothing that is not clearly and distinctly comprehended to be true. Opposed to established systems, governed entirely by clear sense, and dreading, above everything, subtle arguments and chimerical ideas, the philosophers of this age fell into the error of exaggerating these excellent principles, until, by degrees, they confined themselves within the narrow compass of admitting the existence of nothing, except what they could see and touch. By far the greater number ended in materialism. Those who did not carry the fanaticism of incredulity to the extent of shrinking from spiritual essences altogether, desired at least that the spiritual and material world should resemble each other as closely as possible. They required a comprehensible God, because, according to their principles, they could conceive nothing superior to reason; they were anxious not to clash with popular customs, to reject all mysteries, to explain, to define, and in some manner to measure everything. Now, a comprehensible God is of necessity a human God. This can be illustrated by an example. What do we know of a body? That it is shaped, coloured, heavy, sapid, sonorous. Its shape we

* "We ought to know that, to estimate God worthily, we are not to ascribe to him any but incomprehensible attributes. This is evident, since God is the infinite in every sense of the word; therefore, nothing that is limited is consistent with his nature, and all that is infinite in every sense, is in every possible manner incomprehensible to the human mind."—*Malebranche, Eighth Discourse upon Metaphysics*, sect. 7.

can ascertain by sight and touch, its sonorousness by the ear, and so on. Can we affirm that it has no other qualities than those with which we are acquainted? How could we assert this? Is it utterly impossible that it should possess certain qualities imperceptible to our senses? This is not impossible. If these qualities exist, can we figure to ourselves an idea of them, or, in other words, can we comprehend them? It is clear that we can only comprehend the ideas infused into our internal or external experience, or the ideas which are formed through the aid of that experience. As to qualities which do not fall under the test of our senses, we abstain from affirming, because we can neither prove nor comprehend them. Respecting these we are placed as the blind and the deaf are with regard to colour and sound. If, then, the attributes of God differ from those of man, not in degree, but in nature, it is impossible that we can comprehend God. The rationalists of the eighteenth century refused to admit this conclusion, and, consequently, they were driven to create a human God to render him comprehensible. They have thus supplied an argument to the materialists, who are sounder logicians than they in their negatives. From the moment when they reduced God to the point of becoming impotent and useless, they laid down their arms before atheism. They have not comprehended that the infinite could never be analogous to its opposite; that is to say, to the finite. They were unable to perceive that, if the scientific formulas were equally applicable to the finite and the infinite, it follows of necessity that they must be false.

Philosophers required a principle upon which to establish the analogy between God and man; and this is what has been laid down by pre-eminence, and is still confidently repeated in the most authentic schools. According to them, the cause must of necessity contain all that is in the effect. This principle is utterly false, and has led its supporters to lamentable conclusions. They have been driven to maintain that matter is in God and forms an essential portion of his being, because he is, in fact, the author of matter. They have separated imperfection and evil from the Divine nature, because, as they say, God permits evil without creating it; and imperfection in created beings results from their condition of being created, and not from the act by which their cause has produced them. This is an extremely subtle distinction for those theologians who make it their boast to be governed by common sense. They have taken a bold step in thus distinguishing the faculties we derive from our Creator,

from those which belong to our quality of created beings. Without being conscious of it, they have invented a system of metaphysics equally daring and obscure; and their own principles have condemned them to this, or to take refuge in pantheism. And how, after all, could they escape pantheism, after having degraded God until human intelligence is capable of comprehending him?

The fact is, that their principle is totally worthless. It is not true that all that is in the effect must of necessity be in the cause; it is merely true that there is in the cause a power equal to or superior to the effect; which is a very different conclusion. God, being the cause of man, cannot be less perfect than man: this is certain. God, being the cause of the world, cannot be inferior to the world, in perfection: this is also indisputable. But to conclude that God, therefore, resembles man or the world, is equally erroneous and absurd. Truly, we have made an important advance, when we merely prove that God is superior to man! We must demonstrate that he is infinitely so, or remain silent. Let us not hesitate here to insist on the distinction between the finite and the infinite, which constitutes the principal foundation of the dogma of incomprehensibility, as we shall presently find it forming the basis of the refutation of pantheism. These words, infinite and finite, which we are compelled to use, as our language imposes them upon us, comprise a very fertile source of equivocation. The Greek tongue is much more clearly constructed. The word ἄπειρος, which corresponds exactly with our *infinite* (from ἀ, privative or negative, and πέρας, limit), was not defined by the Greek philosophers, *infinite*, but unfinished. They said of God that he was finished, τέλειος, which means complete, perfect; and of the world that it was *infinite*, ἄπειρος, which implies incomplete, imperfect. These words, therefore, *finite* and *infinite*, were not employed by them with any reference to time and space. We, on the contrary, who understand by the term finite, all that is limited, apply to God, by contrast, the quality of infinite; and thus, at once, we give rise to two serious objections. The first is, that we conceive the idea of specific magnitude, although God is not a specific magnitude; and secondly, we give a negative construction to a word which is synonymous with perfect, and to an idea which is the most positive of all our ideas.* This confusion has misled many minds

* "It is not true that we can derive our idea of the infinite from a denial

upon the relative nature of infinity and finity; and has induced them to believe, that to be infinite is actually to fill or occupy infinite time and infinite space. Now, there are no such things as infinite time and infinite space. When we say that God is infinite, we mean to express that he is beyond or without all time and space.

God exists neither in time nor space; for this reason, he is eternal and infinite, and also incomprehensible.

A God, beyond all time and space, is incomprehensible. An infinite God circumscribed within time and space, is a contradiction.

The doctrine we maintain admits a God superior to reason; that which we undertake to refute, asserts a God contradictory to reason. If our doctrine is true, it follows that reason is limited; if the doctrine of our adversaries is correct, it equally follows that reason is impotent.

The whole difficulty lies in bringing our minds to the conviction, that any being can exist beyond or separated from time and space. We hope to show that this is possible, by establishing that time and space have no substantial reality, and mean nothing more than the order of connection between existences relatively limited; and we shall endeavour to prove that it is necessary, by establishing that eternity of time and infinity of space are contradictory expressions.

Let us first examine time and space, and convince ourselves of their nature. I have near me a writing-table. In one of the drawers there is a piece of pasteboard. I take this pasteboard away, and replace it by another. The drawer then has undergone three distinct conditions. First, it contained a certain piece of pasteboard; then, it was empty; and finally, it enclosed another piece of pasteboard. Thus the drawer, with relation to the pieces of pasteboard, is a container. It may be either full or empty; it can receive any particular object, provided only that the dimensions of that object are suitable. This drawer, which is an actual object that I can see and touch, and the extent of which I am able to measure, fills here exactly the part of space, with this sole distinction, that I cannot see space, and am unacqainted with its limits. Let us, then, suppose that, instead of being in a drawer, the first piece of pasteboard was simply placed on a table

of the finite, since, on the contrary, limitation contains within itself a denial of infinity."—*Descartes, Answer to the Fifth Objection* (against *the Third Meditation*), sect. 4.

by my side. I take it from that place: the place which it occupied appears to me to be in reality there ready to receive it again, or any other object, whatever may be its nature. It was full, and now it is empty; but, full or empty, it still appears to be a positive something.

It may be asserted that a particular place is never empty, at least on this earth and what may be called its vicinity; because no sooner is the object removed by which it was occupied, than the air fills it: but it is equally true that this ordinary phenomenon of the displacement of an object, conveys the idea of fullness and vacuity, as also the idea of something that contains substances, and, when it does not contain them, is qualified for that purpose. This is what I understand by space.

Here, then, is space named, and almost defined; and here also is the idea I have formed of space. Let us admit that this idea is very meagre, and that when I have said "it is the conception of something which either contains, or is capable of containing, substances," I have said all that I am able to say. If I attempt to go further, I shall only plunge into negatives. This something is not perceptible to any of my senses; it has no defined shape or dimension; its component parts, if it has them, do not differ from each other; its capacity of containing, the only characteristic with which I am acquainted, is perfectly indifferent to the nature of the object contained. This is, assuredly, a reality which differs much from all other realities. Now, in this world, there are only three ways of being an actual something. It must be either a substance, a quality, or an affinity. In other words, we can conceive the idea of distinct individuals, of the different qualities of individuals, and of the different affinities which these individuals and their qualities bear to each other relatively. We should seek in vain for any specific object of thought beyond these three terms. Space, then, is either an individual, a quality, or an affinity. It seems almost puerile to affirm that it cannot be an individual and yet it is often spoken of as if it were. An individual must either be a spirit or a body; space is neither the one nor the other. An individual has qualities; space neither has nor can have them, for our express idea of space is, that it can receive all qualities. Thus, space cannot be an individual or a substance. Is it a quality? Assuredly it is not a spiritual quality. And how can it be a bodily quality, since we have seen that it does not fall under the cognisance of any of our senses? Space cannot be the substance of a quality; still less can it be the quality of a

substance; for, in either case, there would be some quality or some object which it could not contain, namely, a quality contrary to its own, which is directly opposed to the definition. It remains, therefore, that space must be either an affinity, or cannot be at all. In fact, space is an affinity, and nothing more.

Leibnitz, who in his controversy with Clarke, victoriously disproved the actual existence of time and space, has employed against them the principle of adequate reason, and also the principle of imperceptibility. Here follow his two arguments:—Let us suppose, for a moment, that space exists, and that God has placed the world in a corner of this space: this is opposed to the doctrine of adequate reason; for, space being everywhere alike, God could have had no motive for placing the world in one particular locality rather than in another.

The very hypothesis of the existence of space is absurd in virtue of the principle of imperceptibility; for all parts of space being by definition exactly like each other, we should be driven to conclude that God had created two things precisely similar, which is again an absurdity: God never works to produce nothing; *agendo nihil agere.**

The conclusion at which Leibnitz arrives is, that space is the order of co-existences, as time is the order of successive existences.† If there were no bodies, what would space be? In reality nothing. It might become possible, since bodies might become possible. Space only assumes reality when bodies are produced, and has no existence irrelative of bodies, being nothing more than an affinity or connection between them.

It is said of a body that it is above or under another; that it is either before, behind, at one side, on the right, or on the left. Empty space is not of itself sufficient to render these qualifications intelligible: the space must be occupied, and even by two distinct bodies; for all the different expressions merely designate the relation of one body to another.

It seems, at first, that there is at least one quality of which space is susceptible in itself, and that we might say, even when empty, it is either great or small; but if we reflect a little, we shall find that any estimate of the extent of a space, supposes an actual or preceding comparison with the extent of a body. It is because we have conceived the idea of a difference of dimension

* *Controversy between Clarke and Leibnitz.*—Fourth Treatise of Leibnitz, sect. 5.

† *Ibid.* Third Treatise of Leibnitz, sect. 4.

in bodies, that we form, by abstraction, the idea of a difference of dimension in space. Here is a stick three feet in length. We are asked if it is long or short: the question is absurd. It is long when compared with a stick of three inches in length, and short if contrasted with another of two yards. A size, or, which is the same thing, a space, or, which is still the same thing, an affinity, is not and can not be anything but the result of a comparison. Change the terms of the comparison, the connection changes; suppress one of the terms, and the connection is nullified. If the world contained but a single body, that body would be neither great nor small. For this reason we know not what we say, when we ask why did not God make the world larger? for there being but a single world, it can neither be great nor small. But in the composition of the world there are great and small parts, because there are several parts, and these may be compared with each other.

No man is nine feet high. Let us suppose that God, in his supreme will, had given to an individual man three yards of stature, and that all others had remained as they are; such a man would be considered a giant, a monster. Let us suppose, again, that God had universally increased the size of men in a similar ratio, without changing the rest of creation; the harmony of nature would be disturbed. But if at the same time, and by a single act, he had augmented all existences in the same proportion, what then would be changed? Nothing, absolutely; not even the relative dimensions of beings. If no affinity is changed, no specific size is changed. Thus, once more, size and space are not abstract but relative qualities.

We estimate dimensions by two means—by sight and touch. Experience teaches us to establish a relation between the dimension we see and that which we feel, and to judge one by the other. If to-day, for the first time, God should please so to change our power of vision that all dimensions appeared to be doubled, we should be sensible of the change from recollection; but if he had made this disposition of the eye from the first moment when he gave us the faculty of sight, all our impressions, notwithstanding the difference, would be the same as they are at present. In a word, as regards size, the truth lies entirely in relative proportion. The same reflections may be applied to time. Time is the regulated order of succession, as space is the regulated order of contiguity.

If there were no such thing as size, there would be no space.

If there were but one size, still there would be no space. But if a second size appears, comparison becomes possible, and immediately the idea of space, and, as we may say, space itself, springs up with it.

If every thing was immovable, there would be no time. If every thing moved together, and in the same order, still there would be no time. But as soon as one thing is in motion, and another remains immovable, then time commences. We even express ourselves badly in supposing a single size, or a single uniform movement. Without comparison, and consequently without quality, there can be neither size, movement, time, nor space.

The habit (more common than we are inclined to think) of realising abstraction, leads to the supposition of a time and space independent of duality. We say, "Before there could be either extent or duality, there must have been a space capable of containing them; and before any change could be produced, there must have been a time capable of containing the change." Herein is included a double error. Empty time and space are simple nonentities. Neither time nor space are actual containers. It is in our imagination only that we make them fill this office, because we conceive fictitious spaces and durations of time, measured by other extents and movements. If space is wanting to the development of a body, or time to its history, it is not, in fact, that time or space are deficient, for they have no actual existence; it is that some other body restrains the expansion of the first. We express ourselves defectively, and we think with similar incorrectness. We create two phantoms, by which we are perpetually attended. Philosophy ought to teach us to abhor a vacuum, as formerly was said of Nature. Time and space, considered without reference to bodies, are merely two forms of vacuity; or, to speak more consistently, they are pure nonentities.

Time and space are very closely related. The difference between them resembles that between length and thickness, which are but two dimensions of a single idea. Space is engendered by extent, time by movement; both by duality: for extent and movement are comprised under this common term, which constitutes the first and simplest form of multiplication. Thus, there can be no idea of time and space without the idea of duality; and no actual time and space without actual duality. Everything that falls within time and space, involves duality,

motion, divisibility, difference. The metaphysical language of the Greeks allowed no distinction between the words matter, multiple, moveable, indefinite, and imperfect; and in its precision, full of meaning, it especially denominated matter *the other*, or the *various*. Plato and Aristotle said, *the same* and *the other*, or, rather, the immutable and the moveable, as we should now speak of God and the world.

Time and space being, as we have seen, nothing but affinities, it is not surprising that thought should become lost and confounded when we reason upon their nature as if they were actual existences. We find here three leading difficulties. One, in dividing them, as they can diminish down to the infinitely small; a second, in multiplying them, as they can increase up to the infinitely great; and a third, in isolating them, for when once they are considered as abstractions from the world, we are tempted to pronounce them infinite by the necessary absence of boundaries. Let us examine, under this triple point of view, this strange doctrine of the metaphysical reality of time and space.

The hypothesis of infinite divisibility has filled the history of philosophy with celebrated sophisms. If extent is infinitely divisible, it has been asserted that all dimensions are equal, for they have all the same number of parts; or rather, the parts contained in a great extent, and the parts contained in a small extent, are equally incommensurable.

If a square is inscribed within a circle, there can be no reason whatever for maintaining that the circle contains more parts than the square.

The parts of divisible extension being themselves divisible to infinity, it is impossible to say of what an extension is composed. Nothing but the indivisible can constitute a specific size.

If to escape from the difficulty we fall back upon the hypothesis of indivisibility, still we gain nothing.

In fact, what is an indivisible unit? Let us call it by what name we please, a unit, a monad, an atom, a point, we can say no more than that it is in itself indivisible, and that it produces extent, which means divisibility. This is the true definition, and this definition contains a manifest absurdity, if extent is a real existence. But if extent is only a relative affinity, the difficulty disappears; for there must be two terms or conditions before there can be an affinity, and two points before there can be an extent. Now, it does not result that the extent is composed of

these two points, or that the affinity is composed of these two conditions.

There is no occasion, therefore, to waste time in discussing the scholastic arguments and sophistries of this class, already familiar since the age of Gorgias, and which Bayle has taken the trouble to repeat.*

All these reasonings, so productive of difficulty, are not only based upon the point of a needle, but they are absolutely founded upon nothing. The famous dilemma,—if the monad or point is extended, then there is indivisible extent; if the point is not extended, two points not extended constitute an extent,—this can only embarrass those who consider extent as an actual existence. But for those who question the being, and not the vacuum, there is no more difficulty in comprehending this than there is in understanding that two cannot be one, or that one cannot be two, and that a relative affinity results from two terms or conditions.

It is quite true that we do not recognise the monad in the nature of things. We have an abstract conception, but we can neither perceive nor figure it. We cannot figure it, for all form is an extent; and we are unable to perceive it, for our senses are extensions, the nature of which is to perceive nothing but extension. Why can we only perceive extensions? Or rather, why are we made as we are? This is precisely what we cannot answer: such secrets are impenetrable to human reason. Let us merely remark, that it is the monad, and not the extent, which it is difficult to comprehend. But nevertheless, comprehended or not, extent exists; we establish and measure it, which is sufficient, provided that after having abstracted it from substance, in thought, we do not arbitrarily erect it into a physical reality.

As we raise difficulties out of all measure upon infinite divisibility, others are created without more reason upon infinite multiplication; as thus; Europe, it is said, is larger than France, the terrestrial globe is larger than Europe, and all together comprise but an atom in the universe. But what is the extent of the universe? If it is limited, a thousand objections present themselves: why is it not more extended? What is there beyond it? &c. If it is not limited, it must be infinite; and therefore infinity is

* "It is sad," says Pascal, "to pause over these absurdities; but there are times for trifling."—*On the Nature of Geometry*, edit. Havet., p. 445.

composed of a total amount of limited existences: and thus we create other difficulties equally inextricable.

We think these questions may be answered thus: There is nothing beyond the whole, for this sufficient reason, that any thing beyond the whole is a contradiction in terms. If any one is induced to state such an absurd proposition, it can only be in consequence of having contracted a habit of speaking of vacuum as if it were real. Now, it is not so; for space is only an affinity, and has no actual existence. Moreover, the whole could not be greater than it is; neither could it be less, because it is neither great nor small. In fact, being the whole, it stands alone in its species, and cannot be compared with any thing. Space being only a relative affinity, the whole has nothing to do with space. Space is in it, but it is not in space. We may, if we please, say of the whole, that it is great, because it contains all quantities; but this is a defective mode of speaking. Language is not intended to express what is solitary; it applies to comparisons and classes. That which stands alone belongs to no class, and can scarcely be named. We may convince ourselves still more of the inanity of size, by a few extremely simple propositions. A nutshell is smaller than the world, because the world contains it. Let us suppose that God, by an act of his supreme will, should destroy the world, and then, by a second exercise of omnipotence, create a new world with its luminaries, in the interior of this nutshell; possessing all the relative proportions of the former one. Would this second world be smaller than the first? Certainly it would, in the estimation of whoever knew the nature of a nutshell, because it is a term of comparison; but with those who were unacquainted with a nutshell, the two worlds would possess equal dimensions.* The question is sometimes asked, "Is the world infinite?" This is evidently a mistaken use of the word infinity. Infinite means perfect, and not immense. Shall we rather ask if the world is perfect? Besides that this question is absurd, it has no relation to the dimensions of the world, and to space. Again, shall we demand if the world is incommensurable? Assuredly it is; for there is nothing beyond, with which it can be compared.

This business of measurement is another of our delusions. We do not perceive that measurement is merely a logical artifice employed to give a certain sort of solidity and consistence to bodies, necessary to the operations which our ideas associate with

* *Malebranche, Ninth Discourse on Metaphysics*, § 7.

them. The measurement of time and duration are definitions without which there could be neither history nor geography; but these definitions themselves sufficiently prove that time and space possess only the value of a proportion, the terms of which may be varied at pleasure. The proportion is fixed, and the value of the terms arbitrary. We assume a particular extent as a type, and we employ this to measure all extent and all duration; extent, by carrying the type over the entire surface of the object to be measured, as often as that object will contain it; duration, by means of a needle mechanically moved, and which traverses certain equal spaces in equal times. In consequence of these processes, all our comparisons are made with mathematical precision. We ascertain whether a particular duration or extent is longer or larger than another; but if we wish to say absolutely that it is either long or large without comparison, we feel our impotence, and cease to speak intelligibly.

Thus, a league is undoubtedly a longer distance than a mile. But is it long or short? No one can tell; for this depends on the measure with which it is compared. It is a long passage on foot, and a very short one on horseback; by the railroad, it is almost nothing. Distances, in regard to locomotion, have entirely changed their signification within the last half century. One hundred leagues, two hundred years ago, required eight days of travel; fifty years since, they could be accomplished in three days; at present, they will occupy ten hours. It is the same with coins, which preserve their names and forms while the value is changed. "Was the casket large?" demands Harpagon.—"Yes," replies Maître Jaques.—"No, my casket was small."—"Well, it is small too, if you go to that." And in fact every thing depends on the manner in which it is received. The entire existence of space and time is included in a comparison of great or small; and great and small are nothing except by comparison.

The romance of Gulliver, intended pre-eminently to expose the vanity of every thing human, is also highly profitable in teaching us of how little value are our ideas of simple dimensions, and consequently of dimensions altogether. According to the organs of the spectator, and, what is even more significant, in proportion to the power he exercises, the world increases or diminishes in size. La Fontaine, in relating the thoughts of animals, conveys this metaphysical instruction. The ant, by dint of labour, accomplishes the passage of an ocean two feet in breadth, on a blade of grass. Who can tell us that the minute ant is not a

colossus in the eyes of some other animal who looks on this voyage with wonder? As to duration, it is so little in itself, that we should entirely lose the faculty of appreciating it, if nature did not teach us how exactly periodical are certain phenomena connected with, and separated from, our own bodies. When nothing external forcibly attracts us, we are apt to fall into an inextricable confusion, and to mistake a very short lapse of time for a very long one, and *vice versâ*, according to the state of our minds. Let us here quote another work of imagination, "The Sleeper Awakened," an Arabian tale, which all the world understand when they read it, Arabs as well as Europeans. This is what we find there:—

A certain sultan had a great taste for curiosities; a propensity common to all the sultans of the "Thousand and one Nights." One day, a dervise was brought before him, who boasted of possessing the most wonderful basin in the world. In appearance, it was of a very ordinary description. The dervise half filled it with water, and desired the sultan to immerse his head. The sultan is in his palace, attended by his court, and surrounded by guards. What has he to fear? He ventures on the experiment. Scarcely has he plunged his head into the basin, when he finds himself swimming in the middle of a sea. This is no time to indulge in rage against the dervise, nor to bewail his departed grandeur. He thinks only of saving his life, and lands exhausted on the shore. Strange people surround him, clothe, feed, and make him a slave. He endures years of captivity until he effects his escape. He traverses deserts, environed by innumerable perils, and finally arrives at Cairo. Once there, he is rescued from danger, but not from starvation. The former monarch becomes a tailor, marries, has children, and leads the usual life of the working classes, sometimes sad, sometimes merry, but more frequently wretched than joyful. At length, he is accused and condemned to death by a brother sultan. The executioner is sent for, places him on his knees, seizes him by the hair, raises his sabre, and—at that moment the sultan makes a violent effort, which causes him to lift his head from the basin, when he finds himself once more surrounded by his court and guard, the motionless dervise standing before him, holding his basin, and the grand vizier, who finishes the compliment he had commenced before the imaginary shipwreck. The sultan, in his glass of water, had lived twenty years in a single minute. The story is not a fable, for we all have our heads in the basin at this very hour.

We can comprehend how the mass of mankind, compelled to struggle incessantly with the mysteries of time and space, deceive themselves as to their nature, and instead of regarding them only as the most general points of view under which we can class the different relations of bodies, transform them into distinct realities. The pagans personified time. Many modern minds, without making time a person, are inclined, at least, to consider it a substance. But it is more lamentable and surprising to see learned men and philosophers fall into this superstition; and not content with having created time and space, bestow on these two idols the characteristics of infinity. Herein lies one of the leading vices of modern philosophy. We shall endeavour to point out, in a few words, how it can be explained, and how it ought to be cured.

The school of rationalism, which, in France, opposed and overthrew the doctrine of Condillac, perfectly understood that its principal mission was to ascertain the true character of the idea of infinity. In fact, if we regard infinity as a precise and positive reality, it can only be conceived by reason; but if we imply by this word nothing more than a vague and negative idea, experience, with the aid of generalisation and imagination, is sufficient to establish it. Leibnitz laid down the question in these terms, and it has become one of the boasts of the French rationalist school, in the nineteenth century, to have continued, upon this ground the polemics of the "*New Essays;*" and to have rendered the philosophy of Leibnitz, if not more profound, at least more popular and accessible. Now, to establish his doctrine, Leibnitz followed the psychology of Locke, step by step, showing always that in Locke the infinite is confounded with the indefinite; that the system of the English philosopher explains the indefinite, and leaves the infinite completely on one side; that the idea of infinity, instead of being negative, is the most positive, as well as the most sensible, of all our notions; that it cannot be formed from the mode and amplification of our ideas of finite beings, but that it necessarily results from a distinct conception of an infinite being, endowed with the indivisible fullness of perfection.

In renewing this discussion after Leibnitz, an attempt was made to prove that certain ideas and principles, which are impressed on the mind, cannot result from experience; and to demonstrate this, it has been asserted that these ideas possess an absolute value, independent of the mind which conceives them, and the facts by which they are controlled. This method of

reasoning has been especially employed in discussing the ideas of time and space; and here Leibnitz is lost sight of, and his long and victorious controversy with Clarke entirely forgotten. We have not only, say these arguers, a distinct idea of time and space, but we have necessarily the idea that every thing which exists is in time and space, and, by natural consequence, the idea of an infinite space, and an interminable time.

It must be conceded that if these propositions could be established, they would utterly subvert the doctrine of the sensualists. They embrace three points:—a fixed opinion upon the origin of the idea of limited space and time,—an opinion of little importance in the debate, and which we entirely cast aside; an affirmation of the necessary existence in the human mind of a principle which compels us to localise every extent in space, and every movement in time,—a principle which, not being derived from experience, is inevitably originated by reason; and finally, an assertion of the existence in our minds of the two ideas of infinite time and space,—positive, necessary, absolute ideas, and consequently based on reason, and not empirical.

Is it true that there is a principle implanted in the mind, which compels us to suppose invariably that all dimension and duration is of necessity contained within a larger and longer dimension and duration? This appears evident; we can satisfy ourselves that it is so by the simplest experiment. Let us imagine any extent that we please; we shall find that we are, at the same time, compelled to imagine that this extent is contained within another.* This compulsion is not (as the disciples of sensualism suppose) caused by a generalisation. Neither is it from having established that all the dimensions we perceive are contained within others, that we express this fact in a general formula. The affirmation of the necessity of a container for all conceived extent is spontaneous, immediate, and antecedent to experience. The rationalists demonstrated this against Locke, and up to this point they were in the right. But they had no occasion to go beyond. The demonstration sufficed to confute their adversaries; yet after having overthrown, they were inspired with the ambition of constructing; and here they went entirely astray. Being satisfied

* "Whatever may be the extent of a space, we can conceive a larger one, and again a larger one still, and so on to infinity, without arriving at a space which admits of no increase. The same argument applies to time. We can always imagine a longer time, without reaching final duration."—*Pascal, on the Nature of Geometry*, edit. Havet., p. 451.

that any given dimension must be contained within another, they concluded the existence of infinite space; and feeling convinced that any specific duration, no matter how long it might be supposed, appears to be always preceded and followed by another duration, they thence decided on the existence of infinite or eternal time.

Now, if it be true, as Leibnitz has shown, and we have endeavoured to demonstrate after him, that time and space are nothing more than the successive or co-existent relations which belong to different things, what meaning can we attach to these expressions of infinite time and infinite space? We can imagine the infinity of a being; but what is the infinity of a relation?

Without proceeding further, a relation or affinity without end, is evidently an assemblage of incoherent terms, which conveys no intelligible meaning to the mind; but, strictly speaking, if it be insisted upon that this infinite relation is an actual existence, it will become equally necessary that the beings which it seems to classify and measure, must be in themselves infinite, and also infinite in number; for the relative quality supposes two things placed in connection with each other. Thus the chimerical notion of infinite time and space necessarily implies the infinity of the world in the sense of duration, and also in that of extent.

The infinity of the world in duration and extent is a doctrine maintained by all those who deny the existence of a God distinct and separate from material creation. This doctrine appears contradictory to us who are not pantheists; but, nevertheless, it presents at first something accessible to reason—the image of a reality without limit, while infinity of time and space is merely a qualification of nonentity.

We are ready, if required, to concede to time and space a reality which they do not possess; our opponents will gain nothing by this admission. Whether space be, as we believe, nothing more than a co-ordinate affinity between existing beings, or, as our adversaries maintain, an individual reality, still it is clear that the mind cannot conceive the idea of space without at the same time conceiving that it is divisible. All that has extent must be divisible, and this applies equally, whether that extent be full or empty. What, then, is an indivisible extent, or an indivisible space? From the moment when an extent ceases to be divisible, it ceases to be an extent, and becomes either a point or an atom. This is an axiom in geometry, and a self-evident truth. Let us then determine that space, whatever else it may be, possesses

inevitably and of necessity the characteristic of being divisible. And now, what is it to be infinite? We have seen that it is to possess actually, fullness or completeness of existence. We do not force this definition on those against whom we are now arguing; it is common to both them and us; we learned it in their school, and in the school of all the rationalists. If infinity is not this, they have done wrong to Locke, and their whole doctrine falls to the ground. They cannot, therefore, dispute this definition; and what does it imply? The indivisibility of the infinite, as the doctrine of Locke, implies its divisibility. The infinite of Locke is composed of an indefinite number of units joined to each other, and for this reason he concludes that the world may be infinite.* The infinite of the rationalists is a single unit, to which nothing can be added, and from which nothing can be subtracted. Thus, according to them, that which is infinite is of necessity indivisible. If, on the one hand, that which is space is of necessity divisible, and, on the other, that which is infinite is of equal necessity indivisible, in pronouncing the words infinite space, we utter something almost as rational as if we talked at random upon divisible indivisibility.

The same reasoning may with equal facility be repeated as regards time. Let us conclude, then, that infinite time and space are not actual existences; in the first place, because time and space are merely relatives; and secondly, because divisibility is inherent in time and space, as indivisibility is equally inherent in infinity.

But by what blindness can any school of rationalists place their adversaries under the necessity of bringing such a demonstration against them? How is it that they treat with such lightness this all-important word infinity? Can infinity be suitable to any being except to God? Can any being be infinite in one sense, and not in every sense? What difference is there between the materialist who derives the infinite from an accumulation of finite beings, and the rationalist, who composes infinity from an accumulation of many infinites, which in reality are mere abstractions and chimeras? If infinite space and time actually exist, do they thus exist beyond God, or within him as his attributes?

If they are in God, he is necessarily extended and divisible, and thus, like ourselves, neither perfect, nor absolute deity. If they are out of or beyond him, there are then several ways of being

* See Note at the end of the volume.

infinite: the idea of infinity, and the idea of perfection, are not identical, from whence it follows that infinity is only a negative conception. On whatever side we turn, we encounter nothing but contradictions and impossibilities. We either fall into pantheism or a plurality of gods. Whoever is God is all God, and cannot degenerate in any place or portion of his being. We must either renounce God and the doctrines of the rationalists, or chase away these absurd chimeras of absolute time and space—fictitious existences, which for so many years have darkened the clear light of philosophy.

At present, we obtain a glimpse of our general conclusion. There is no such thing as infinite time, or infinite space. Time and space begin with the world; they are necessary conditions of the world; but God, who is infinite, is neither in time nor space. He is beyond, without, and above both. God, therefore, to us, is incomprehensible.

To convince ourselves of this, analytically, after having proved that God is neither in time nor space, let us take some of his attributes and examine whether they can possibly bear any analogy to human faculties. For an example, we select intelligence.

Is God intelligent? We have seen that he is, and we have permitted ourselves to say that he contains within himself a certain perfection which we designate by that term. It cannot be that he does not know the world, for he made and governs it; neither can he be without intelligence, for it is better to know than not to know. As soon as he knows, he knows to perfection; and this is a sufficient reason why we, with our limited and imperfect understandings, are not capable of comprehending divine intelligence. But, besides, it follows from our imperfection that we are subject to change, or circumscribed by the conditions of time and space. It also follows, from the perfection of God, that he is immutable or infinite,—which means, above all time and space. Now, how can an intelligence, necessarily changeable, comprehend an intelligence necessarily immutable?

Is it not true that the human mind passes incessantly from one idea to another? "We sail on a vast medium, ever uncertain and floating, driven from one side to the other. If we seek to attach and fix ourselves to any particular end, it shakes and leaves us."*

* Pascal, *Thoughts*, edit. Havet., p. 13.

A brilliant imagination is one that flies rapidly to unexpected and remote ideas; a solid mind can recover, when they are required, the ideas it has formerly conceived; an expanded genius embraces many ideas at the same time: but, whatever may be the proportions of this triple affinity between human intelligences, there is no single mind which can preserve all these ideas together, which can embrace them simultaneously, and can take in at a single effort a vast number of new ideas. We feel, as it were, our weakness in our power; for if we wish to acquire a fresh idea, we can only accomplish it by giving up another. This we call concentrating our strength. The operation is precisely the same as that executed by the general of an army when he reduces the wings to strengthen the centre of his line. He who does not possess this power of concentration has a weak mind; and yet to exercise it is to prepare by sacrifices for an unequal contest. Every effort to accelerate, strengthen, or extend the action of the thought imposes fatigue; redouble the effort, and the fatigue becomes intolerable. At a certain point, we feel the necessity of pausing, of proceeding more deliberately. It seems as if we struggled less against the difficulty than against the time. With that, we can reach the ideas we wish to attain. Let us then employ the time required. The intelligence which travels quickly, traverses a given space in a single day; another, which moves with less speed, requires two days, and perhaps a year. There are not only natural, but artificial distinctions. Because I have studied and am acquainted with the latter, I shall arrive at the result more rapidly than one who is ignorant of them. Is it not the same in the physical world? It was always practicable for a man to go from Paris to St. Petersburg. Formerly this journey required several months; now it can be accomplished in a few days. Such is progress—a victory over time.

The reason why I am thus condemned to the attainment of knowledge by degrees, is, that I myself belong to duration. Now, duration being divisible, every reality has but an indivisible instant, followed by an indefinite series of new indivisible instants. This indivisible instant is called the present. While I am writing this sentence I am no longer what I was when I commenced it. I remember that I have been what I was; but I am now changed. In the heart of my conscience, something invincibly attests my identity: but my whole is comprised in passing on, and remembering. The moment which approaches, is not yet in existence; that which has been, exists no more. I am as if suspended

between two nonentities, and every hour, every minute, every second, carries me along with the rapidity of a torrent. I possess memory, and some faculties of foresight: with the latter I compel myself to follow the course of my life; but my conscience only is clear; memory, imagination, and inductive knowledge, serve too often but to throw me back into visible darkness. Thus, I feel throughout my entire system, at the same time the exciting impulse and the failing power.

Let us consider with some attention a very important attribute of man, which we call the faculty of reasoning. This faculty gives us the power of attaining, through the means of two ideas, a third idea, which, unless by the aid of the preceding, would be beyond our reach. As we well know, it seldom happens that an argument springing from two common ideas arrives at a third idea at once unexpected and extraordinary. Things do not proceed so rapidly. From the humble state in which we are when we begin to reason, we reach, by slow and successive degrees, the condition of learned disputants; that is to say, we establish not a single argument, but a long series of arguments, one depending on the other. But when several are thus connected, does not the whole appear like a single argument, the principle of which is the principle of the first, and the conclusion that of the last? Now, who can decide the number of intermediate arguments through which any given mind must pass before it arrives from the first at the last point? This depends on the strength or weakness of the individual mind, engaged in the discussion, and is a question of time. Is your mind powerful? If so, you will hurry at once from the principle to the conclusion. Is it weak? In that case you will pause and divide your argument into distinct sections. There is no master who has not proved the truth of this in the course of his practice. I put forth a demonstration, and I perceive that I am not understood: sometimes I confine myself to repetition as an appeal to concentrated or lengthened attention; but nearly always I explain or enter into minute points, and proceed slowly by minor arguments. The same system prevails in the physical world, for the tortoise at last reaches the end of its journey. To know, to judge, and to measure our capacity, is to estimate correctly how much time we require. Genius has been called a long patience. In other words, genius is a mighty victory over time; a victory which prompt spirits may win by sudden assault, and slow ones by perseverance. Montesquieu has profoundly observed, "The success of most undertakings depends upon knowing exactly how

much time success requires." Descartes, at the conclusion of his "Discourse on Method," does not complain of the weakness of human intelligence, but of the brevity of human life.

It is not enough to acquire ideas; it is quite as essential to preserve them. Nature has provided for this, and, while imposing limits to our power of acquiring and preserving, she has given us resources by means of which we can combat with and pass beyond these barriers. To extend our acquisitive faculties we have argument; and to widen the scope of the conservative quality we can generalise and classify. The effect of generalisation is marvellous, and enables us to multiply ideas a thousand fold, by submitting to the labour of detail. To form abstract conclusions is to give up details to gain the whole. He who cannot generalise is unable to reflect, and he who is unable to abstract is equally unfit to generalise. In life, we are placed, like the captain of a ship, occasionally on the forecastle, looking out and struggling to penetrate the mysteries of ocean; and at other times, shut up in the cabin, employed in arranging the objects we have disco vered, and in casting superfluous ballast to the waves. Thus we gain at the price of loss. We lessen the burden that we may be able to bear it.

In general, analysis is a condition of all synthesis; and all analysis consists in diminishing the object under consideration to adapt it to our own weakness. It has been asked, to what point must we divide to complete an analysis? Even to the minuteness of our perceptions. There is no absolute rule, because there can be no common measure. Every mind has its own range and horizon. Language is the form which our thoughts take to communicate themselves to the other intelligences. It is also the indispensable instrument of our studies; without language, we can neither abstract nor generalise, and consequently it becomes necessary to us that we may reason and remember. The instrument of language is definition, which supposes a double comparison, one with a superior, and the other with a corresponding species. Language is therefore essentially analytic; to such an extent that when we form a complex idea we are obliged to unravel it that we may convey its meaning by words. Every proposition includes or implies the affirmation and absolute reality of our being; so that besides the three grammatical members of which it is composed, it involves a triple conclusion, of which the one expressed supposes two understood; and the same phenomenon which we observe in language is reproduced in all our

thoughts. The simple conception of an object by the mind conveyed through an organ, would be merely a vision, and in some manner a dream, if our intelligence were not impressed with a belief in its identical reality, which we call conscience ; and also with a belief in the real existence of an absolute being, which we denominate reason. By means of these two established conditions, one of which permits me to pronounce and affirm, while the other establishes a fixed point from whence I estimate the value of the object perceived, I emerge from the chimerical to the actual world. To decide that there is motion, three conditions are necessary: an immutable being, a being that has moved, and I myself who compare them. Thus thought is always manifold, not only in its act, but in its constitution and foundation. Even when I consider this faculty in an indivisible moment, and in its application to a single object, it is still manifold ; for it places all conception between the affirmation of the absolute and the affirmation of myself. Such is the law of my imperfect and limited mind, which everything condemns to motion, which is nothing except by motion, and is only compelled to move on account of its impotence.

After these reflections, it is not necessary to examine the nature of God, in order to ascertain how much his intelligence differs from ours. He never shifts from one idea to another, for he can never differ from himself. To him, the past, the present, and the future, are the same ; except as he distinguishes them in their relations to us, and in the same manner as we ourselves are distinguished. But, as his being is persistive and not progressive, and the plenitude of his existence is included in a single act, so all his components are ever and equally present to himself. He neither remembers nor foresees. He cannot abstract or generalise, for if he did, there would be some detail of which he had no conception ; he never argues, for if he argued, he would require an intermediate term to perceive the affinity of a principle to its consequence. The chief duality which is in us disappears in him, because, being himself reason, he has a full consciousness of the truths of reason. All this is as certain as it is incomprehensible. We understand, with evidence, that God is a being immutable in all his attributes, that he is above time and space, and consequently there is nothing in his nature which resembles either extent or duration ; that he has no thoughts, sentiments, or inclinations which gradually succeed each other and grow to maturity as in us,

and we acknowledge in all humility that this constitution of existence is too far beyond our intelligence for human explanation.*

It is even by a palpable abuse that we use the words being, thought, sensation, and will, indiscriminately, whether speaking of God or of ourselves; for they cannot possibly have the same sense in the two cases. We know what they mean when applied to us; when used with reference to God, they express only vague and indeterminate ideas. St. Augustine, in writing of the Trinity, says, "We speak of God as unity in three persons, less to say something than not to remain altogether silent." From the same motive, we have endeavoured to express the perfections of incomprehensible Deity. Plato was so thoroughly convinced of the fundamental distinction between divine and human attributes, that he did not say, "God is being," but "God is above being." Christianity has taken another view, and after having declared that God is, *he who is*, subjoins by contrast that the world is purely nothing. Compelled as we are to employ human language in speaking of God, let us never forget that he is incomprehensible, and above all, when we say of him that he exists, thinks, and determines, let us remember that these words merely convey that he is the unknown and perfect cause of what we denominate being, thought, love, and will.

* "If there is a God, he is totally incomprehensible; for having neither parts nor limits, he has no affinity with man."—*Pascal, Thoughts*, edit. Havet., p. 145.

CHAPTER III.

CREATION AND PANTHEISM.

"I had then lost sight of thee for a little space, oh my treasure, oh infinite unity, that surpassest all multitudes! I had lost thee, which was more than if I had lost myself! But I find thee again with more convincing evidence than ever. A cloud had obscured my weak sight for a moment, but, thy rays, oh eternal truth, have dissipated the gloom! No, nothing but thee can satisfy my thought, oh unity, who art all in thyself, and before whom all accumulations of number are as nothing. I see thee again, and my soul is filled with thee. All the false infinites in thy place would leave me empty." —*Fenelon, On the Existence of God*, part ii. chap. iii.

We know that God exists, and to what extent we can understand him. The question now above every other, is to examine whether he has made the world as a creation separated from himself, or whether it is merely a modification of the divine substance.

In our judgment the point is already decided; for we have established that God is neither in time nor space: he is therefore beyond and outside the world. It is idle to speak of eternal time and infinite space; these are mistakes which lead directly to pantheism. The mighty vacuum can only be occupied by God, and his presence pervades it with mobility and divisibility. For this reason the dogma of incomprehensibility is repugnant to all rationalists who have allowed themselves to be deceived by the pretended infinity of time and space. They require a comprehensible, a human deity, because they have no wish to establish an abyss between God and the world. They are ready with refutations of pantheism; but these refutations evince their good faith, joined to inconsistency, and recoil back upon themselves.

The reason why we enter on the discussion of pantheism, instead of proceeding at once to the proof of creation, is, that creation cannot be proved: it is clearly demonstrated by the demonstration of the existence of God, unless it can be shown that it is impossible. The pantheists have no other argument upon which to establish their system, than the impossibility of

creation. At one time they maintain that we are unable even to form an idea of creation, and that the word is void of meaning; and at another, that the omnipotence of God could not produce anything from nothing, because no terrestrial power is competent to do this. Thus, they admit that there is a God, but pretend that he is incapable of having created the world; whence they conclude that God and the world are distinct without being separated. The question, then, is confined to the possibility of creation. Creation is real if it be possible.

We shall commence by stating the objections of the pantheists. First, What do we understand by this expression,—to create? The Christian religion defines it thus: To create is to produce something from nothing. This is, in plain fact, the meaning given by all who admit the dogma of creation. Now, is it possible to produce something from nothing? We may make one thing into another, which is to transform; but to make something from nothing, or to create, is not only impossible, but absurd. Nothingness is not an element which can be employed for any given purpose.* We introduce the term in language by an artifice which can be easily explained; but we must not carry the deception to the extent of assigning to nonentity the functions of reality, for the two ideas confound each other.

God evidently can do what man is incapable of doing. But when we affirm that he makes a given thing which no one but himself can make, it becomes necessary, at least, that we should comprehend our own affirmation. To utter a word to which the mind attaches no intelligible idea, is mere loss of time. What idea can we form of creation, if the act of creating consists in making something out of nothing? Whence could we derive such a notion? There is not a single object in creation which does not proceed from another object; we have nothing either within or beyond ourselves which can give us the idea of original creation. As regards this idea, we are in the same situation with one born blind, in respect to his conception of colour. The blind can speak of colours by hearsay; but if all mankind were without sight, could they speak of colours at all? Could they suspect the existence of colours? Since, then, no man can create, how can men acquire the idea of creation?

A particular school of metaphysics considers it a leading point

* "Principium hinc cujus nobis exordia sumet:
Nullam rem e nihilo gigni divinitus unquam."
Lecretius, De Rerum Natura, lib. i. vers. 148, 149.

to examine into the origin of ideas; and enters into minute analysis to arrive at the conclusion, that our idea of cause is produced by conscience, and not by external perceptions. Although the world abounds in causes, we should live, according to this school, in the midst of all these powers, without knowing what powers are, if we were not one of them ourselves; and the same school attempts to maintain, that, although unable to create, we possess the idea of creation.

No one dreams of disputing the axiom, that there can be no effect without a cause. But of what value is this axiom? To comprehend it fully, we must first comprehend what is understood by causes. The ancients divided them into four kinds: the productive, the formative, the material, and the final. Let us lay aside the formal cause, which applies more exclusively to certain metaphysical doctrines. The three others are so comprised in the general idea of causation, that all schools agree upon them; hence it follows, by virtue of the axiom, "every existing thing supposes a cause,"—that a material cause is as essentially requisite as an effective or a final cause.

The deists reason thus; "If I see a watch, I say there is a watchmaker: if I look on the world, I say there is a God." But when I see a watch, I not only say there is a watchmaker, but I say also that this watchmaker had copper and gold at his disposal; and these elements which he has employed are as necessary as himself to the work he has produced. It becomes then a mere waste of language, and an outrage against sense, to speak of creation; for the words that we assemble together, when we say that nothing has become something, imply a contradiction, and present no reality to the mind. Here is a first objection against creation; let us now consider a second. Let God be a creator or not, what is he in himself, in his inmost nature? He is perfect; for he must be so, or he could not be at all. Do we know what perfection is? Not absolutely; but we know something at least of the nature of a perfect being, as this, for example, which is but a definition: that it must be without defect, and consequently—*one only*. All deists, as well as pantheists, insist on the unity of God; and they prove it by establishing, that not only is a single God necessary, and that the harmony of the world supposes a single government, but that the co-existence of two perfect beings involves a contradiction. In fact, according to the deists, each of these perfect beings is wanting to the other, so that neither can be perfect. It is clear that

thought can conceive that the being of one might be increased by the being of the other; we thus imagine the absurd hypothesis of a perfection more perfect than perfection. It follows, therefore, that God is one, a conclusion with which all the rationalists agree. But for the same reasons, he must be alone. In other words, it is not enough that there is but one God; there can be but one divine being.

To prove this, or rather to prove pantheism, we have only to take up the argument by which the partisans of creation demonstrate continually that God is one. Since there can be nothing beyond God which imagination can add to his being, what does it signify whether we place beyond him a deity or a worm? It is absurd to deny that he *can* be limited, and at the same time to admit that he *is* limited. Whatever this limit may be, it ceases to be infinity, if it exists. Do we say there are but God and a worm? If so, there can be no God, for the reality of this worm can be added to the totality of God. Between this God, limited by an atom, and the perfect and illimitable God, there is a fathomless abyss. This is the argument of the Eleatics.* They said, "either God is all or nothing; for if there is any reality beyond him, that reality is wanting to his perfection." A third objection has been drawn, not from the metaphysical nature of God, but from his intellectual and moral composition. If God has made the world, he has made it either on compulsion or of free will. It is contrary to the hypothesis of creation to suppose that God should have been constrained to create; for this production necessary to the producer appears not to be separated from him. And besides, if the world is not only distinct but separated from God, whence could proceed the necessity which forces God to produce the world? There is no power beyond, which can control him; we must, therefore, conclude that it belongs to his nature to produce a work external and strange to his own being. This is to fall into an evident absurdity. Therefore, God has created of his own free will, or, in other words, he created because he would create. Here arise innumerable difficulties, if not impossibilities.

Let us first consider this act—to will; the consequence of which is a defined and limited world. Is it not, in itself, a determina-

* A sect founded by Xenophanes in the sixth century before the Christian era, and named from the city of Elea. They maintained that God and the world were the same.—*Note by Translator.*

tion, and, consequently, a limit of the nature of God? It seems that no act of God can be otherwise than infinite, and can have only infinity for its object.

This will of the eternal God, is it eternal like himself? It must be, since there cannot be two Gods, or, which amounts to the same thing, since there can be no difference in God. As he is eternal, there is in him neither before nor after: he is above time, and he is perfect, there cannot be in him first one state, and then another; he is eternally similar to and identical with himself. If, therefore, he has willed, he has willed to all eternity; his will, like his existence, can have neither beginning nor end. Now, is this continual and eternal will, continually and eternally efficient? Undoubtedly it is, for if its efficiency were not immediate, time, which we have excluded from the divine attributes, would intrude itself into divine power, and eternity would disappear. Besides, it is impossible that God should will uselessly. To will without an object is the direct characteristic of impotence. What, therefore, should render the will of God inefficient? There is nothing beyond him which could oppose an obstacle, since, according to the hypothesis, all that is beyond him is his own work. Nothingness cannot contend with God. Let us, therefore, conclude that the world has had no beginning, and will have no end. But this conclusion is as formidable to the dogma of creation as the hypothesis of divine fatality. When once eternity is attributed to the world, the idea of eternity becomes dark and confused. The world is moveable, and, therefore, perishable. Is it not holding logic in contempt to say, that we cannot suppose the world to have been created without affirming that it is eternal?

Why do we require the dogma of creation? To place in absolute separation from God the imperfections of the world. But what does it signify that this imperfection shall be separated from God, if it is his necessary work, and co-eternal with him, by virtue of his own nature? Is it not to be imperfect, to be condemned to produce eternal imperfection?

What we have said of time, let us now repeat of space. The same reasons which compel the world to be eternal, oblige it also to be unlimited. The efficiency of divine power can neither be limited by place nor moment. Thus, the world is infinite in time and space. As soon as this consequence is made apparent, the mind is compelled to avow that it has bewildered itself, for there are neither infinite space, infinite extent, nor indivisible divisibility. The advocates of creation prove against the atheists that

the world is neither infinite in time nor space. They must either renounce this argument, or give up divine omnipotence.

Let us efface these difficulties, and suppose them resolved: here are still others. If God has willed the world, he has desired it. To will is to produce an act with knowledge of the cause, and for a specific motive. Why has God desired the world? It is impossible that he can have desired it; being perfect, he wants nothing. Not only he cannot desire, but if he desired, would his wishes incline him to imperfection? Every being who desires an inferior being degrades himself. God can neither love nor desire anything but perfection; he cannot desire the world, he cannot will the world, and he cannot have created the world.

This impossible desire, if it existed, would be eternal. Thus, the desire of God would be as inefficient as his will, whilst the world is eternal. The inefficacy of will is impotence; the inefficacy of desire a misfortune. We must either resign ourselves to these impieties, or confess once more the eternity of the world. But the arguments which prove the eternity and infinity of the world, do they not also establish something else? Are there no limits but in space and duration, and are there none in the very essence of our being? The act which produces a finite series is finite; the act which produces an infinite series of finite beings, is it not itself finite? If the world is created by a perfect God, the world is perfect. But if it is perfect, wherefore was it created? and why should there be a God?

No, the world is not perfect, according to the advocates of creation; it is not eternal; it is not infinite: these are conclusions which they will never renounce; they would sooner oppose their own principles. Let us see, then, whether, when these contradictions are swallowed up, an imperfect and terminable world does not prepare new ones.

God is all-good and all-powerful; he has made the world of his own free will; why, then, is there evil in the world? The advocates of creation are bad lawyers:—first, to prove that God exists they show that the world is imperfect; and then, to reply to the objection which we have just set forward, they hesitatingly attempt to deny the imperfectness of the world. These tergiversations condemn them, and leave them nothing but half-reasonings and contradictory views. If the world is perfect, let them say so: if it is imperfect, let them explain how and why.

Even their explanations are contradictory. If we open their books, we perceive that some maintain that what appears to us

evil, is, on the contrary, good; and that we are deceived by our own ignorance alone. What does this answer mean? That there is no such thing as evil, or that there is less than we suppose? What imports the degree? It is sufficient, that evil should exist to limit the goodness and power of God. Others assert that evil was necessary that man might be tried. This is a mere subtlety. Of what use is this trial to him who could at first have made us better? Who succeed under it? The greater number? No; by the avowal of all, a very small minority. Thus, for one family of the elected, who buy their happiness by long and terrible sufferings, the immense majority have nothing but the trial without the happiness. And is it after giving utterance to this despairing truth that they sing hymns in honour of divine goodness? Let us leave evil thus considered, and take finitude under its abstract form in time and space. The world is limited in time. What was God doing before he produced the world? Why did he do without the world at one period, and why afterwards did he will that the world should be? What relation has the durability of the world with the time that has preceded and will follow it? The same questions may be applied to space. Why has God filled one corner of space and left the rest empty? What use does he make of this vacuum? What is the relative dimension of full and void? Somewhere there must be an atom which is the last component of the world; on the side on which we are, it verges towards another atom: to what does it approximate on the opposite side? Can it be, by chance, to nonentity? The doctrine of creation is now obliged to assign a part to nothing. This looks like philosophy based upon nonsense, and expressed in words without meaning. As soon as we have determined that the world is limited in time and space, we may be asked why the Creator has chosen a certain limit rather than another; why he has not doubled the dimension and duration of the world; why he has placed it where it is and not in some other spot; why he has not created it one minute or a million of years sooner—for it is all one? No answer can be given to these questions, perhaps on account of our ignorance: not so, but on account of the nature of things. All space is equal to another space, and all time to another time; therefore all time and all space could receive the world as readily as the particular time and space which have received it. If then God has selected this time and space in preference to any other, he has chosen without a motive; whence it follows that he is governed by chance, and is neither good, nor

intelligent, nor free. It is to fall below the standard of rational beings to determine without a motive, or upon insufficient motives. And how could the nature of God submit to be guided by chance, if it be true that the excellence of the end, in every thing, constitutes the goodness of the act, and the superiority of the agent?

Such are, in a condensed form, the chief arguments of the pantheists against creation, which they pronounce impossible, contradictory, and absurd: from whence they draw this conclusion, that if God is the cause of the world he has not employed creation as the means. Instead of using the word creation, which conveys no distinct idea, why have we not sought in the examination of nature to explain the action of a power? We are ourselves a power; what do we do under this signification? We modify, beyond ourselves, a pre-existing matter, and we modify within ourselves our own proper substance. God cannot modify a pre-existent matter beyond himself, for there is nothing, and there can be nothing beyond himself. What then does *he* do? He modifies his own substance in himself, and these distinct modifications, inseparable from God, are the phenomena of the world. Thus the abyss is filled-up which it has been attempted to hollow-out between God and us, unintelligible metaphors disappear, and all becomes simple, clear and comprehensible. Evil itself vanishes in this unity in which the whole is responsible and can repair itself. We are no longer compelled to make an effort to understand that God is near us, since it is in him that we live and have our being.

Having pointed out the objections; we shall now endeavour to reply to them.

But, first of all, let us throw aside an error which might uselessly perplex the discussion. The pantheists demand, in what originates the idea of cause? We do not derive this notion from external observation, but from conscience. Thus, the first cause with which we are acquainted, is the cause that we are ourselves. Now, we are not a creative, but merely a moving cause. The idea therefore that conscience supplies us with is that of a moving cause. If the act of creating were comprised in the act of moving, we should then, by means of analysis, be able to pass from the idea of a moving cause to that of a creative one: but they are not so combined. Creation and motion are two acts of a very different nature, and the idea of the second is so far from being included in the idea of the first, that the power of creating is evidently much superior to that of producing movement. The

pantheists conclude from thence that creation is a hybrid idea; or rather, according to them, a formula without idea, the incomprehensible definition of an act which has no existence.

This difficulty is not serious, being founded on an error in the statement of fact. It is true that we derive the idea of cause from our conscience; it is also true that we are not ourselves a creative cause; but the idea that we acquire in the first act of conscience is the simple idea of cause, and not the complex notion formed of all the elements comprised in this primary act. In other words, although the first cause of which we obtain perception is a moving cause, free and voluntary, we do not commence with the complex idea of a moving, free, and voluntary cause, to arrive afterwards at the simple ideas of cause and freedom. It requires reflection to comprehend that the power of causing which is in us, is nothing more than the power of motion and transformation. The same degree of attention which determines the kind of cause that we are, settles also that which we are not. The complex ideas of creative and moving cause both arise from the reflections we make on the simple idea of causation supplied to us by conscience.

Let us add that we ought not to confound the scientific formula of an idea with the idea itself. It has been said that the formula of creation was only discovered by Christianity. Even if this were so, the result would be no more than that an extremely clear idea has been slowly established. But the statement is erroneous, and the proof lies in the sentence of Lucretius, *ex nihilo nihil.* Lucretius denies creation; he therefore must have had a conception of what he denies. The truth is, that no school of philosophy ever taught the dogma of creation before Christianity.

The facts regarding the origin of the idea of creation being thus re-established, let us examine more closely the objections of the pantheists.

They begin by reproaching us with using empty phrases when we assert the doctrine of creation, because the word creation is incomprehensible, and conveys no explicit idea to the mind. Is it true that the word creation carries with it no distinct idea? The entire question is comprised in this. Now there are words which represent a simple idea, and there are others which embody a complex idea. The word creation belongs to the second category, and we shall endeavour to show by a most minute analysis what are the simple ideas that it includes. First, when we say that God has created the world, we affirm that he is the cause of

the world. This is a clear, positive idea, the scope of which we thoroughly understand.

In the second place, the word creation evidently implies that the cause of the world is exterior to the world. It is so certain that this is comprised in the word creation, that the whole dispute between the pantheists and us is confined to this point: for they declare that the phenomena of the world are simple modifications of the divine substance; while we maintain, on the contrary, that the phenomena of the world modify, not the substance of God, but an extraneous substance which God has produced through his omnipotent power and freedom of will. Is not this thoroughly comprehended?

Here are then two ideas, one positive and the other negative, implied by the word creation: and yet we are told that it has no meaning.

When I say, "God created the world," I mean, "God produced the world, and has produced it as a separate existence from himself." This affirmation and negation are both indisputably clear.

The word creation implies something more. It signifies, that when God produced the world as a separate existence from himself, there existed nothing previously separated from him, either substance or phenomenon. Is not this third idea as clear as the two others?

Thus, there are included under the term creation three perfectly intelligible ideas; so intelligible, that they all three provoke extremely explicit negations, in which there is not the slightest obscurity. Why do they speak to us of a doctrine that means nothing? There is none more full of meaning. When I affirm the reality of creation, assuredly I know what I assert and what I deny.* What is there then really incompre-

* "What is the meaning of producing the world from nothing? That which never was, never can become anything else. This is true; but to say that God has made the world from nothing, does not imply that he used nothing as a material with which to construct the world; it means that the world did not exist of necessity, and that it derives from God not only its form and movement, but its being and substance. That it exists actually, separated from God, although dependent on him; that the will of God has produced the world voluntarily, and by the sole virtue of its own efficacy, without the concurrence of any other principle; because, beyond God and his works, there is nothing: that the power of God not only differs from the power of man by this unique characteristic, that ours is limited, while his is infinite, but also, that we can only modify what already exists, while he can bestow existence. When we affirm, in this sense, that God could not extract the world from nothing, we limit the

hensible in this word creation? One point only, but a very leading one. I comprehend that God is the cause of the world; that he has produced the world as a separate existence from himself; and that before the world was made, nothing existed separate from God. But I cannot comprehend how he has been able to produce the world under these conditions.

Now, then, the object of the pantheists appears in all its nakedness. They desire to know how God has produced the world. It is in vain to tell them under what conditions he has produced it: if we are unable to penetrate the absolute secret of his creative power, they accuse us of not understanding ourselves, and of substituting words for ideas. The truth is, that far from knowing how creation has been produced, we do not know how any thing has been produced, not even the cause of our own being. What then is the cause either within or beyond ourselves of which we can assign the reason? If we exhaust our faculties in searching for examples, we shall find none. When we discover a resemblance between the mode of action of a new cause, and that of one previously known, human pride gratifies itself by calling this an explanation: it is in fact nothing more than a comparison, and as we could not possibly discover how the earlier cause acted, we are equally unable to lay open the mode of action of the more recent one. Our ignorance, in this respect, is invincible, even when the question relates to secondary causes, or even to the cause that we are ourselves. What will this ignorance amount to when the inquiry applies to God?

We conclude, therefore, that the objection founded on the incomprehensibility of creation has no weight. Let us now consider the next. If the world is an existence separated from God, we may, by power of thought, add this existence to God, and thus conceive the idea of a being more complete, and consequently more perfect than perfection; which is absurd.

This difficulty is a serious one; so much so, that according to our opinion it should be set aside rather than solved. We shall show that the pantheists have no right to bring it in opposition, and that it is more formidable to them than to us. It proves nothing against our doctrine, but it establishes something against human knowledge.

It is not necessary that any particular school when opposed to

Divine power, which has no limit except contradiction. Does the production of a substance involve contradiction? If so, let it be proved."—JULES SIMON, *History of the School of Alexandria*, vol. i. p. 368.

another should take advantage of arguments which bear against all schools at once. Even between the pantheists and us there is this difference, that we candidly admit the limits of philosophy, while they acknowledge none. We maintain and prove that the mind of man cannot explain every thing; they, on the contrary, are compelled to assert that all things are accessible to human intelligence. Now, the existence of plurality will never be explained or understood: neither by us, who regard plurality as a production separated from God by his omnipotent will, nor by the pantheists, who look upon it as composing an integral and necessary portion of the divine nature.

It is abundantly evident that God suffices to himself. It is equally so that he possesses entire plenitude of being. If he has this perfect fulness of existence, if it is impossible that any reality can be wanting to his nature, how can there be existence separated from him? Let it once be admitted that he is not single, and we can then, in imagination, add something to his being, and consequently augment divine perfection; which is absurd.

This objection astonishes the mind; but what are we to conclude from it? That reason cannot explain every thing, and consequently that reason is limited. And what beyond this? Nothing, as we shall proceed to demonstrate.

On the question of the existence of God, and before entering into details as to the government of the world, there are not, and there never can be, more than four schools or doctrines: those of the atheists, the eleatics, the pantheists, and the partisans of creation. The atheists maintain that there is no God; the eleatics that there is no world; the pantheists that the world and God are one.

And the partisans of creation, that the world exists separated from God, by virtue of his omnipotent will.

Those who oppose to us the objection we are now discussing, will they conclude from thence that God does not exist? Certainly not: they believe themselves as far removed from atheism as we are. Or, that the world has no existence? No: if such a doctrine could have been professed in remote ages, when the audacity of thought acknowledged no restraint, it is entirely inconsistent with modern practice, which, after all, attaches some value to evidence.

This difficulty then is placed in our way, solely to establish the conclusion that the world and God are one. This being admitted, the question may be rendered in the following terms:—

The co-existence of unity and plurality, or if it must be so expressed, of perfection and imperfection, is inexplicable; but is it more so in the hypothesis of creation than in that of pantheism?

Let unprejudiced minds weigh attentively the question as here put, and they will convince themselves of the complete and scrupulous accuracy of the formula. Now, the world, according to pantheists, is a portion of God, and according to us, is exterior to, and separated from, God.

So that the question may again be rendered thus:—

Unity and plurality co-exist. Is it more difficult to comprehend that plurality forms a portion of unity, than that plurality is exterior to, and separated from, unity?

Or, finally, in other terms:—

Is it more difficult to comprehend that imperfection should form a part of perfection, than that imperfection should exist exterior to, and separated from, perfection?

This comprises the whole. The question thus laid down is determined.

It has been timidly asserted that the world has more reality in the system of creation, which gives it an individual substance, than in the doctrine of pantheism, which reduces it to the condition of an assemblage of phenomena; but, besides that this hierarchy in degrees of reality partakes somewhat of the arbitrary and subtle, the degree signifies nothing. It is sufficient that imperfection exists, and it imports not whether it is a substance or a quality, a world, or an atom.

Neither must we believe, according to the pantheists, that unity co-exists with plurality, without producing it, while according to us, it does produce it. The truth is, that it produces it in all cases; there, beyond itself; and here, within its proper substance. If it is asserted that one of these operations is more easy and intelligible than the other, the assertion amounts to nothing beyond senseless words; for we know not how any thing is done, whether we consider our own works or those of God; we believe that we comprehend better the action of the forces which are the most familiar to us, and this is all. Now the action of producing within and beyond ourselves is equally familiar. I produce within myself a thought; I produce beyond myself a movement. There can be no doubt that these two problems, whatever the presumptuous philosophy of pantheists may say to the contrary, are perfectly incomprehensible to me; but they are incomprehensible in the same degree.

We entreat our readers not to lose sight of this double principle, which we believe we have made sufficiently clear by what has preceded. It is true that the existence of the world is as inexplicable as it is indisputable. And it is also true that the existence of the world is, at least, as inexplicable in the hypothesis of pantheism as in the doctrine of creation.

Thus, pantheism remains (without any advantage) encumbered with the difficulties that peculiarly belong to that system.

A third objection has been urged against us, in the fact that the partisans of creation are compelled to maintain that God has voluntarily produced the world.* We fully admit this. There have been, undoubtedly, supporters of our doctrine who declare that God was constrained to this act, that he could not do otherwise; but we ourselves accuse them of inconsistency, and adhere to the perfect liberty of creation. Can any one believe that it is possible to augment the perfections of the Deity, by taking from him free-will, and subjecting him to inevitable laws? It must follow as a direct consequence of this assumption that liberty is evil in itself, and when uncontrolled, an inferior attribute. Can such a conclusion be sustained for a moment? On what ground or authority is this attempt made to impose conditions on God? Is it that the necessity of producing imperfection is comprised in our idea of a perfect being? But, they reply, if God willed the world, he has always willed it, and therefore the world is eternal. This objection ought not to be used by the pantheists. Do they mean to say that their God, inseparately chained to the world, began to produce phenomena? Since they admit eternity, let them not set it forward as an obstacle to others. There is this difference, according to their doctrine, that the world not being separated from God, divisibility forms a portion of unity—and do they call this the clearness and comprehensibility of their hypothesis?

But if our God has willed the world, he has desired it, and has therefore *desired* imperfection: if he has desired the world, he has known it, and, therefore, *known* imperfection. This, according to the pantheists, is a declension; and, in fact, logic supports them. We shall not affirm that it is so, but that it appears to be

* *Corollary to Proposition* 22.—"It results from thence that God does not act by virtue of a free will."

Proposition 23.—"The works that have proceeded from God could not have been made in another manner, nor in another order."—*Spinoza's Ethics*, part i. Translation of M. Emile Saisset, p. 33.

so. Philosophers, who were not pantheists, have been the first to acknowledge, that, judging by the standard of man's faculties, God could neither create, nor desire, nor know the world without declension. Aristotle said, "God knows nothing except himself, for there are things better unknown than known." And Malebranche declares in his *Christian Meditations*, that "God has chosen to take on himself the base and humiliating condition of a creator." But let us remember that this is the standard objection constantly recurring, the question of the co-existence of the unit and the multiple; and the point requires to be well considered, for it embraces, under different forms, every difficulty that can be raised on the question of creation. Now, as heretofore, the problem is insolvible by human reason; perhaps, in some measure, more inaccessible to the pantheists than to all others; they encounter special difficulties and impossibilities in the common impossibility. How can they allege that to will, desire, or meditate imperfection is a degradation, and that to contain it is not equally one? Is not this mere trifling? Does it not require an effort to comprehend that the perfect can degrade itself by producing the imperfect. But is it not extremely easy to understand, without an effort, that the perfect must cease to be perfect, if imperfection is included in its nature? When the pantheists triumph beyond measure in the imperfection of the world, and oppose this as an obstacle to divine perfection, we might say, and truly, that their object is either to render the world perfect, or to destroy it altogether. But no; their entire design is to transport the world into God: and in this manner, they do away with the antagonism which exists between the creator and his work, the unit and the multiple, the immutable and the moveable, the perfect and the imperfect. And this perfection necessarily united to imperfection, is presented to us as the ideal of perfection! This *all* (Παν), composed of two parts, one of which contradicts the other, is offered as the explanation of a nature supremely comprehensible!

Even in bringing the question down to the conditions to which they reduce it, and taking their own view, do they not admit that God meditated the production of the world? If they deny this, they are little better than atheists; if they allow it, why do they oppose objections to us which apply so evidently to their own principles?

Undoubtedly, the eternity and infinity of the world are formidable difficulties; its limits, if they exist, give rise to problems

which confuse human intelligence. But, at least, we endeavour to account for and explain what appears unsettled. We know that time and space are not actual existences, but merely relative qualities; that, consequently, totalities and units, wanting the term of comparison, escape from time and space; that the human mind, condemned to analyse, and advancing only by the aid of comparison and definition, becomes perplexed and confounded in presence of what it can neither compare, define, nor measure. We have also learned that man is made for an intermediate position, and to act accordingly; that he is neither infinitely great nor infinitely small; that his horizon, as far as it extends, is clear, but that beyond it he sees only darkness: happy, in having sufficient intelligence to distinguish his path, and to enable him to perceive in the invisible world a star which directs him; a brilliant and a friendly star, and, in spite of its unknown nature, an undecaying source of light and love. But all these problems which we lay down without being able to solve them, and which we pronounce to be beyond solution, are, as far as they regard the pantheist, not problems, but contradictions. He can no longer distinguish between time and eternity; or if he does distinguish, it is only under the condition of uniting them in the same reality. He vainly pretends that God cannot move; since, according to his own doctrine, movement incessantly springs forth from this immoveable source, and as necessarily falls back into it again. God, at most, in his definition, will be the substance of which motion and time are attributes; and thus it will become necessary to oppose in contest the substance and the phenomenon, the being and the life, the producing nature, and the nature produced.*

It seems as if we were present at the torture described in the dream of Dante—two souls struggling in one body.

Finally, how is it possible to explain why the pantheists thrust forward the moral and physical imperfection of the world as an obstacle to the system of creation? We freely confess the difficulty of explaining evil. It is true that evil exists to a great extent. Not all the systems of philosophy, nor all the optimists,

* "By producing nature, we ought to understand that which is in itself and conceived by itself; or rather, the attributes of substance, which express an eternal, an infinite essence; that is to say, God, inasmuch as we consider him an unfettered cause." "I understand, on the other hand, by produced nature, all that which follows from the necessity of the Divine nature, or of any of the attributes of God."—*Spinoza's Ethics*, part i. prop. 19, schol. Translation of M. Emile Saisset, vol. ii. p. 31.

can succeed in palliating or diminishing it. The triumph of philosophy, and its true value, consist in teaching us resignation: and thus we learn how bitter is the savour of life. But if calamity were diminished, we should still reproach God in our weakness, for our lives are passed in suffering, and not in learning how to suffer. Nevertheless, we, who believe in creation, and who consider man a being distinct, and separated from the creator of all beings, although we cannot deliver ourselves from endurance, we learn at least to comprehend it. We understand the unceasing, severe, and obstinate contest of this thinking atom, against the immense and insensible powers of nature, and also against the human billows which our common destiny must encounter, but which overbear individuals with the indifference of brute force. We enjoy a bitter satisfaction in the struggle; and, convinced of our immortality, because we are equally certain of our distinct existence, we feel that being alone immortal in the midst of the world, our victory is safe, although dearly purchased. Thus we pass through the combat, bearing within ourselves what unites, at the same time, resignation, consolation, and courage—an undying hope. What do the pantheists offer in place of this immortal identity? They leave us the battle, but take away the reward. They probe the wound, but tear away the dressing. They expose our sores, and to alleviate them, teach us that we, sick and deformed, constitute the lowest portion of a whole, filled with health and harmony. Man may complain and suffer, provided that the universal serenity is not disturbed. He dies; but in dying, he knows that the mass of existence has suffered no diminution. His dissolved being goes to unite itself with other atoms, to produce fresh phenomena in the common bosom of nature: a dull insignificant immortality, which the heart rejects, the conscience shrinks from with horror, and which implies annihilation of the person, if not of the entire existence.* According to this system, when I am overtaken by death, what remains of my individual being no longer concerns myself, but belongs to a whole, imperceptible to my reason, and ignored by my conscience. Thus my own immortality becomes a matter of indifference to me; my memory, my identity, and my person subsist no longer. My soul is absorbed in the universal soul, as the

* "The present existence of the soul, and its power of imagination, are destroyed as soon as the soul ceases to corroborate the present existence of the body."—*Spinoza's Ethics*, part ii. scholium of the second prop. Cf. part v., prop. 23, and scholium of prop. 24.

atoms which compose my body are swallowed up by the movement which is perpetually dissolving and reforming all existing substances. Do I take any thought of these inert portions of my corporeal nature, which, after my dissolution, go to fatten the earth? Can I draw either consolation or reliance from this physical theory, that not a particle perishes in the material world? And what difference is there in the destiny of my body and that which pantheism promises to my soul? Thus I shall perish totally, for the future of my bodily substance is in fact no futurity. Nothing remains to me but my trial and suffering, which are individually mine without compensation. And yet, the supporters of this doctrine speak of the justice of God! They reproach us with not sufficiently respecting it, when we maintain the dogma of a future life, and when we proclaim human identity, the continuance of the person, rewards and punishments! Is it not, therefore evident that, if to account for the existence of evil in the world is a difficulty for us, for them it becomes an impossibility.

How would the question stand, if instead of suffering, we were to speak of sin? It is not easy to explain sin. We attribute it to our freedom of action: but we know that passion acts powerfully against freedom, that reason is unsteady, and that victories are rare, difficult, and painful. We can scarcely suppress the murmur on our lips when we remember that God, if he pleased, might have increased our light, our strength, and our disposition towards good. But at least, according to the system of creation, the principle of our errors is in ourselves; where is it according to the doctrine of the pantheists? In God! For why speak of the human power as distinct from the divine nature, in a theory which admits for God and man but one substance, one existence, and one history?* The pantheists may endeavour to reply, but let them answer us as they please, their arguments must of necessity prove more for us than for them.

We have now reached what may be called the common-place argument for the refutation of pantheism. Pantheism, in its ordinary acceptation, is entirely comprised in the identity of God and the world. The refutation of pantheism equally consists in attributing to God the imperfections of the world. The following proposition is unquestionably simple, conclusive, and evident to

* "All that I can reply to those who believe that they can speak, remain silent, or, in a word, act by virtue of a free decision of the soul, is, that they dream with their eyes open."—*Spinoza's Ethics*, part iii. prop. 2, and scholium.

general conviction. The doctrine of the pantheists consists in maintaining that the world is in God: now the world is evil, or at least contains evil; therefore there is also evil in the nature of God—which is direct blasphemy.

We perceive, in fact, that in all ages, pantheism has been held impious by every contemporary school. Atheism itself has scarcely excited more indignation. Three eminent names are distinguished in the history of this doctrine—Parmenides, Plotinus, and Spinoza. They recal very different epochs of civilisation. Parmenides carries us back to the pagan world, and the first dawn of philosophy and learning; Plotinus, to the last defenders of ancient institutions engaged with the early founders of Christianity; and Spinoza to the absolute triumph of the Christian faith, with its universal and acknowledged authority. Nevertheless, Parmenides, Plotinus, and Spinoza, have been encountered with the same weapons. In the full strength of the seventeenth century, Bayle, Malebranche, and Fenelon, those enlightened and acute minds, so capable of thoroughly sifting the most abstruse questions, have not disdained to borrow the commonest arguments in opposition to Spinoza. They have shown absolute perfection enduring within its own bosom every want, weakness, and deformity; immensity everywhere divisible; sovereign goodness united, in the same being, to utter perversity; the same nature occupied incessantly in creating and destroying, in building up and throwing down; inflicting punishment on itself, producing evil and its remedy, establishing and violating the law, free in its most humble manifestations, and governed in its entire essence by a blind fatality; God and the world amalgamated into one, and ending, through the struggle of opposing principles, in contradiction and chaos. To this summary the pantheists reply that a confusion is imputed to them which they have not created,—that they have never confounded God and the world, but only the substance of God, and the substance of the world. Because God cannot be separated from the world, nor the world from God, it does not follow that the world is God, or God the world. There is only one substance, but there are two different modes. To conclude universal identity from identity acknowledged in one particular point, is to transform at pleasure the doctrine in dispute, and to render it absurd to obtain an easy triumph. Those who reason in this manner against the pantheists might be caught in their own arguments; for, since they admit that every individual has a substance peculiar to himself, they are forced to allow that there

is in each individual a substance inseparable from attributes, and attributes inseparable from substance. Do they, therefore, conclude that all that is said of substance can be applied to attributes, or that all that is said of attributes can be applied to substance? Not at all. Substance has the nature of substance, and attributes have their nature of attributes: these are two natures which no one can separate or confound. And since it is so, why not allow the pantheists to distinguish between a perfect, active, acting, and productive substance of the world, and attributes or phenomena incessantly produced by this substance, and which differ from it the more, that their nature is to be produced, while the nature of substance is to produce. When the pantheists say that the whole is God, they do not in the least mean to convey that every separate part of the whole is God. The whole is complete, because it is the whole, and consequently perfect: a part, on the contrary, by reason that it is a part, is inevitably incomplete and imperfect. Where, then, is the contradiction, and where the confusion? There is some truth in this answer; nevertheless, the objection of common sense remains. A substance which necessarily produces evil, and is at the same time the necessary receptacle of evil, cannot be absolute perfection. A whole, of which evil constitutes a part, may be good; but it cannot be the all-good. It is not the ideal of perfection, for I can imagine another whole from which evil shall be excluded. A body may be beautiful, although it has a wound; but it would be lending ourselves to voluntary blindness to pretend that the beauty would not be increased if the wound were removed. Thus, distinctions are futile, and evil in God is a degradation of the divine nature. The pantheists are justified in asserting that the existence of evil is embarrassing, even for us; but undoubtedly there is a great difference between producing an existence capable of good and evil, and in being in oneself at the same time capable of good and evil. Our God may be a perfection difficult to explain, but the God of the pantheists is not a perfection.* Thus re-established in its true conditions, this kind of objection, which is in every mouth, possesses considerable importance. We might even carry the consequences

* "Is it a perfection to be unjust in its parts, and iniquitous in its modifications, ignorant, senseless, and impious? There are more sinners than good men, more idolaters than believers: what a confusion, what a combat between Divinity and its components! What a monster we here conjure up, Aristus! What a fearful and absurd chimera! A God, inevitably hated, blasphemed, and despised!"—*Malebranche, Ninth Discourse on Metaphysics*, sect. 2.

of this doctrine further, as regards the moral effect. According to the system of the pantheists, it seems that evil may legitimately assume its place in us, since it exists also in God. I have weaknesses, but God has them too, I disturb order, I outrage nature, I disobey the law, but God does the same. How, then, can I say there is a law for good? There can be no law, if all is in God, unless, indeed, there is no evil in his nature. There is not even a principle or an axiom of which the contrary is not true. I cannot love God for the good he has done to me, without hating him for the evil by which it is accompanied. He is good and bad, beautiful and repulsive, intelligent and blind, worthy to be adored and detested. Shall I, with this understanding of his attributes, invoke or worship him? I lose at once the law, the prayer, and the hope. Pantheism wrests from me what constitutes the strength of my thought, and sustains my heart. It is to be remarked that pantheism, like all other false doctrines, turns its conclusions against its premises. The same rule applies to mysticism, and every system which, by the permanent or temporary identification of opposite natures, involves the principle of contradiction, and entirely compromises logical reason. What do the pantheists require at the commencement? The absolute perfection of God. What do they arrive at, at the end? They accumulate all imperfections within the divine nature. This alone suffices to condemn them: their own arguments supply their own refutation. If we open Spinoza, but more especially Plotinus, we shall find that no writers have ever declaimed in more pompous terms of absolute perfection; never has it been more clearly demonstrated. It seems as if their God ceases to be perfect, as soon as he begins to reflect, for he possesses two conditions—the act of thinking, and that of being the object of thought. Plotinus carries back his deity beyond the possible and real, into the region of chimeras, by dint of taking from him all that constitutes distinction and limit; and when he has banished him to this inaccessible solitude, and from these lofty dialectics descends to explain the production of the world, what does he do? He pours into the bosom of God the streams of indefinite multiplicity. He employs the first part of his philosophy in excluding all evil from the divine essence, and the second in restoring it.

With all its contradictions and mistakes, pantheism attracts many minds: it assumes a false appearance of mysticism; it substitutes permanent identity for communion and ecstacy. It has had the art of displacing the question and refuting the principle of

creation, instead of clearing up the principle of the confusion of substances. While the pantheists employ themselves in establishing that creation is incomprehensible, we forget to ask them, by what emanation they propose to replace it. But it is useless for them to change the form of the argument, to substitute irradiation for emanation, and to make God by turns a source and a centre. These are mere images and metaphors, which it is almost puerile to erect into a doctrine. That the world emanates from God, as heat proceeds from flame, or as water runs off from an overfilled vessel,—this is what they propose to us in place of direct creation: a mighty discovery, and quite satisfactory to common sense! The vase, and the water issuing from it, produce a well-designed image; but it is not easy to apply it, or to comprehend that the water was not in the vase before it left it, or that it did not cease to be there as soon as it was poured out.

It was scarcely worth the trouble of insisting so strenuously on the incomprehensibility of creation to arrive at an hypothesis equally incomprehensible; which doubles the importance of the existing difficulties, and, in addition, embraces such palpable contradictions. In fact, to render their doctrine plausible, the pantheists must combine with it the system of Bishop Berkeley. Berkeley is a sceptic of a very peculiar class. He admits the existence of reason and the laws of reason, and does not utterly reject experience; but, under the difficulty of comprehending the reality of bodily matter, he supposes that God has created us to believe that there are bodies, and laws by which bodies are regulated, although nothing of the kind actually exists in nature. Thus, for example, I believe that I see this table before me. I believe that I touch it. I affirm that it is square in shape, brown in colour, &c. Nothing of this is true. It is neither square nor brown, nor a resisting object, since there are no bodies; but we dream that it exists, and by the will of God all men are the dupes of their imagination. The pantheists are compelled to come to this conclusion, and to say that we dream of bodies, and that God dreams of us. This is rather more comprehensible than emanation; for a dream requires for its existence the dreamer only, and the entire existence of the dream is in the dreamer. Let us admit pantheism on these conditions, and figure to ourselves the perfect being compelled to dream all these imperfections. Let us ourselves resign our existence into the hands of the disciples of Spinoza, and become, in consequence, less than an affinity, less than a phenomenon: and let us place this world, with all its

luminaries, below the importance of a bubble of soap. *Ægri somnia.* After having shown themselves so haughty and exacting at the outset, and having denied that human intelligence is confined within certain limits, the pantheists conclude by bringing us down to a very low estimate. But it is not only in a metaphysical sense that they thus depreciate us. Having taken away our substance, they deprive us of liberty. The entire person of man disappears, absorbed, carried away, and annihilated.

They may be permitted to think that it is a mere trifle to deprive man of free will: but we, in our turn, may be equally allowed to say, that according to us, and the immense majority of all reflecting persons, to compel a school to declare themselves fatalists, is to force them to sign their own condemnation. We have no occasion to press the point, for logic and practical experience equally prove that liberty can have no place in the pantheistic hypothesis: but it is ever profitable to meditate over and fathom the depth of these conclusions. How can the pantheists allow freedom of action to man, since they deny it to God?

If the world is in God, it becomes inevitably necessary, and everything that is in him becomes necessary also; for if the world had not been at all, or if it had been in any one of its parts different from what it is, the nature of God itself would be changed; which is absurd. Thus there is neither free will in God nor in the world. The word liberty, in the doctrine of the pantheists, represents nothing but a negative, and corresponds with no reality. To convince ourselves of this, we have only to read Plotinus and Spinoza.

Plotinus says that God is a free agent, for not being able to produce evil, he always produces good, without effort; * and that man can become free, because he can become analogous to God by the annihilation of the evil passions.† According to Spinoza, man is free when he directly desires good, and regulates his life

* Ἀποπώτερον ἂν γίγνοιτο αὐτὸ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἀποστερεῖν τοῦ αὐτεξουσίου, ὅτι ἀγαθὸν καὶ ὅτι ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ μένει, οὐ δεόμενον κινεῖσθαι πρὸς ἄλλο, τῶν ἄλλων κινουμένων πρὸς αὐτό, οὐδὲν δεόμενον πρὸς οὐδενός. "It is the height of absurdity not to allow liberty to God, since he remains immoveable in himself, and that all beings tend towards him, while he does not tend towards any other being, and requires nothing from any one!"—*Plotinus, Ennead.* vi. l. viii. sect. 7.

† Τῷ δὲ διὰ νοῦ τῶν ἐνεργειῶν ἐλευθέρῳ παθημάτων τοῦ σώματος, τὸ αὐτεξούσιον δώσομεν. "We shall call him free, who, by strength of intelligence, has delivered himself from the passions of the body."—*Plotinus, Ennead.* vi. l. viii. sect 3. See *Jules Simon's History of the School of Alexandria*, vol. i. p. 468 *et seq.*, and p. 574 *et seq.*

entirely by the dictates of reason.* According to both, liberty does not suppose a struggle, but rather the impossibility of a struggle, by the absence or destruction of the evil principle.

Let us suppose that Plotinus and Spinoza admit for a moment the existence of liberty as we understand it; that is to say, that they allow man the power of performing an act which depends solely on human will: what will result from the dogma? The consequence must be, that man, by the sole possession of liberty, becomes superior to God.

In fact, God, not being free, can neither modify his own substance, nor the laws, nor the phenomena of the world. What God is unable to accomplish, man can perform: he introduces into the whole an element which is not regulated by immutable order, but depends on human caprice.

We say that two things are distinct when we can form in our minds an exclusive idea of either, without however imagining that they could exist in this isolation: and we say that two things are separable, when we can conceive them as existing and subsisting detached from each other.

Thus, for example, the idea of the statue is inseparable from the mind of the sculptor, while the statue itself is at the same time distinct and separated. Let us consider God as the sculptor. Is the world then the idea or the statue?

Not only, for all the reasons we have stated, is the world the statue, but we, who form a portion of the world, are also statues. We could not exist without God, who is our cause, but we exist distinct from him, and the proof lies in the fact that we are free.

The statue contains within itself all that is necessary to existence, on the sole condition of having been made. It proceeds of necessity from an external cause, but, indisputably, it has nothing to do with that cause. It has therefore an individual being, a person that belongs to itself.

* *Proposition* 17.—"God acts by the sole laws of nature, and without being constrained by any one. *Demonstration.*—It is from the sole necessity of the Divine nature, or, in other words, from the sole laws of this same nature, that an absolute infinity of things results, as we have shown in proposition 16; and it has been further established, in proposition 15, that nothing exists, or can be conceived, without God, but that all is in God; consequently, there can be nothing out of God which can induce or compel him to act; whence it follows that he acts by the sole laws of his own nature, and without being constrained by any thing else: which was to be demonstrated.' —*Spinoza's Ethics*, part i. Translation of M. Emile Saisset, vol. ii. p. 72.

How then can this, which is true of unconscious marble, not be equally applicable to a being endowed with the power of modifying itself according to its own free will? Not only do I conceive that I have a separate existence, but I feel that I can enter into a contest with other existences. How! I contend with them, and yet form but one with them? Being acknowledged free, I become, by definition, the sole author of the phenomena which are passing within me, and nevertheless if we are to believe the pantheists, I am neither an individual, a substance, nor a power? Such a conclusion is contrary to sound reason and evidence. Being free, I am a power. Thus, there are two powers, God and man. The pantheistic unity is destroyed.

Let its advocates increase to what extent they please, the difference which separates absolute from relative power, or the force that is all sufficient to itself, from that which is derived and limited; still they cannot say more, or even as much as has been said by the supporters of the doctrine of creation. We were the first to acknowledge that man cannot do without God; but he can struggle against God, and therefore he is a separate being: as a single blade of straw suffices to overthrow atheism so is a single free act enough to destroy the system of the pantheists. What necessity is there then for all these arguments? As long as I feel that I am a free agent, all the theories they can urge will never induce me to forget that I am an individual person, and consequently a substance. Let us conclude, then, that pantheism and fatalism are the same thing. The doctrine is a sentence of death.

The pantheists endeavour to turn the entire argument between them and us, on substance. How is it they do not see that it is quite as difficult to reconcile the existence of human liberty with the unity of God? There are not two questions, but one. Since they are afraid to limit the divine substance by the co-existence of another substance distinct from it, they ought also to hesitate, from the same motives, before they limit divine power by the co-existence of another power. It signifies little whether we suppose, separated from God, a substance or a free power. Or rather, of these two ideas, a substance and a free power, the second is the clearest, the most decided, and that which bests conveys the notion of a separate reality, of an individual existence. Strictly speaking, we may confound the rest; but it is quite impossible to thrust into one, two distinct liberties struggling against each other.

Not content with depriving us of liberty, pantheism at the same blow destroys the immortality of the soul.*

Spinoza has said that the soul is immortal; that he whose body is suited to many functions, possesses a soul, the greater portion of which endures for ever. But this eternity with which he deceives us, is not the eternity of the individual person. Every faculty that I feel within myself contradicts the doctrine of Spinoza; conscience, liberty, and all that distinguishes and separates me from the rest of creation. He saves nothing from death but my material substance, and this he absorbs in universal matter. I myself perish, or, rather, my living identity perishes. Spinoza, in fine, notwithstanding the beautiful language in which he writes, and the precise regularity of his exposition, accumulates contradictions, because he is opposed to common opinion and the ordinary interpretation of words. We have seen him allow liberty (while jesting with the word), at the same moment that he denies it. By another equivocation he speaks of the immortality of the soul: we admit that it is clear, that the destructive and the creative powers are exactly of the same order; and that a system which denies the possibility of creation, must also deny the possibility of annihilation. Thus, according to the doctrine of Spinoza, the soul cannot perish; nothing perishes, but all is transformed. But it is this transformation which terrifies me. Death, without destroying my substance, takes away my identity. Is this to be immortal? Spinoza might as reasonably say, that my body is eternal. From the moment that my soul ceases to remember itself, I am no more interested in its immortality, than I am in the dust to which my body is resolved. We reduce the pantheists to this dilemma: They pretend that God and the world are distinct without being separated; which means, in precise terms, that they are one by unity of substance. But in this necessary connection of two opposite conditions, one of which represents the perfect and immutable, the other the imperfect and moveable, how do they distinguish the portion assigned to God from that allotted to the world? On whichever side they

* "Et quoniam mens est hominis pars una, locoque
Fixa manet certo, velut aures atque oculi sunt,
Atque alii sensus, qui vitam cunque gubernant;
Et veluti manus atque oculus naresve, seorsum
Secreta a nobis nequeant sentire neque esse,
Sed tamen in parvo liquuntur tempore tabi:
Sic animus per se non quit, sine corpore, et ipso
Esse homine."—*Lucretius*, lib. iii. v. 547 *et seq.*

turn, they are confounded; for, if they insist on the plenitude of divine reality, the phantom of the world vanishes, and God remains alone: if, on the other hand, the reality of the world occupies their minds, God in their system is reduced to an abstraction. The whole theory, sifted to the bottom, is nothing but a compromise, without candour or clearness, between Eleaticism and Atheism.

It is idle to say, in defence of the pantheists that they are mystics; that, in fact, they sacrifice the world to God. Truly, we are under an obligation to them, if placed between the mystical absurdity of Eleaticism, and the natural absurdity of Atheism, they make the least odious selection. We admit willingly that Plotinus and even Spinoza tend towards mysticism. This lends a certain effect to their systems without adding to their truth or solidity. But at the present day, atheism is at the bottom of the greater part of pantheistic doctrines. We are no longer in the age of Parmenides of Elea, who denied the world, nor even in that of Plotinus, who considered it a phantom, and treated it with contempt. Experience and sensation no longer suffer themselves to be forgotten. The chimeras of idealism are rejected. The world which conscience and the senses make manifest, imposes itself on our conviction with undeniable authority. Amongst those who would suffer themselves to be seduced by pantheism, there are very few indeed who are disposed to give up the dogma of human liberty: and there are none content to be only a phenomenon, and to see in the world nothing but unsubstantial appearances. Whether through choice or compulsion they give the preference to reality, and in consequence incline towards atheism. Here then is a system, which because we are unable to comprehend creation, proposes to us to believe that every thing emanates from God as water issues from a vase, or a spark from the fire: which from a dread of sullying divine purity by the supposition that God has created an imperfect world, identifies the Creator with his work, and makes this very imperfection a portion of perfection; which, first denies us the right of supposing that God could have imagined, desired, or willed the world without losing his own immutability; and concludes by placing this eternally changing world in his very thought and existence: which refuses to admit that God has created evil or unhappy beings, and yet at the same time considers all wickedness and misfortune as phenomena of the divine substance—a system, according to its partisans, alone capable of preserving the grandeur

of deity, the dignity of man, and the privileges of reason; and which ends in confounding God with an obscure and unintelligible universal substance, in depriving man of his future, of his liberty, and of his identity; and in compelling reason to admit contradictory doctrines. All this arises from denying, at the outset, the superiority of God over man; and so originates this host of contradictions and failing arguments.

Alas! In examining our own natures we find many reasons for limiting human intelligence in order to preserve it. Supreme and powerful within its proper sphere, when it endeavours to soar beyond the prescribed boundaries, it loses itself in impossibilities and paralogisms. The mind is formed to connect consequences closely with a first principle, and to receive this originating cause without demonstration: to explain by analogical reasoning all the different parts of the world, and to explain the world itself by the Creator, but on the condition of worshipping that Creator without endeavouring to comprehend him. So impossible is it to prove the first principle, or to understand the first being, that the faculties of man can only demonstrate conclusions on the preliminary admission of the incomprehensibility of God, which forms at once the basis of all knowledge, and of the world itself.

The pantheists desire to comprehend everything, including the divine nature, and for this special reason they comprehend nothing. We, on the contrary, believe that the divine nature is incomprehensible, and this point admitted, we explain everything else.

To maintain that everything can be proved is to be ignorant of what proof is. All proof rests upon a principle, and every principle upon another principle, of which it forms its base. There is, therefore, a first or originating principle, which must be admitted without proof, or all logic is but a circle of error. In like manner we can control our faculties one by the other; but we are compelled to say with Descartes, "I think, therefore I am;" and consequently to acknowledge, without direct proof, the authority of conscience. This, it may be said, is humiliating to man. Yes—if man has persuaded himself that he is God.

To pretend that the supreme being, from whom all existence is derived, is comprehensible, and therefore analogous to the beings he has created, is to feel the necessity of explaining the world, and to refuse the means of explanation. Why do we admit the existence of this sovereign power, whether we

denominate it God universal or substance? Because there is nothing in the world which sustains itself. Let us not, then, assign to the solid base the fragility of the beings we desire to place there. We may easily dispense with a deity analogous to his own work. This human God is but the first link of a chain; and the entire world, with all human intelligence, are thus swept away into indefinite vacuum, until a fixed point is found, beyond creation, alone and unconnected, which may be in itself the cause and foundation of every thing else.

PART THE SECOND.

PROVIDENCE.

CHAPTER I.

THE DEMONSTRATION OF PROVIDENCE.

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handywork.
"Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.
"There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard."
Psalm xix. verses 1, 2, 3.

THE most important of all considerations to man, is that of ascertaining whether God is actually interested in and occupied with him. Unless this conclusion is borne in view, the problems we have just gone through will lose a portion of their influence upon the soul. It is not only as a basis upon which to found metaphysical argument that we require a God, but to shed hope and consolation over existence.

Providence is God's direct government over the world and mankind; and to recognise this, it seems simply necessary to look around and behold in all things the traces of wisdom and goodness; just as in judging of the laws of any particular country it is sufficient that we see the inhabitants peaceable, industry flourishing, and art encouraged. Since the beginning of philosophy, systems have been erected on this foundation. While metaphysicians multiply formulas, and exhaust their intellect in an endeavour to discover the mystery of the creation in the nature of God, (a bold undertaking for human weakness,) less presumptuous philosophers content themselves with studying the wonders of nature, with proving that the immense variety of its

phenomena are regularly controlled by uniform laws, with accounting for evil, while demonstrating that it does not proceed from God, but from the ignorance and sinfulness of man, and that its existence is necessary in order to produce an increase of benefit. They hold that everything is for the best, from the profoundest science to the most common-place and trivial ideas.

Each habit of daily life, each sentiment of the heart, each vague impression, whether in the mind of an infant, or in the enlightened comprehension of a man; every discovery in science, every achievement in art, serves in their estimation to raise them towards God. They make the minute description of the creature a hymn to the praise of the Creator. Far from sharing the deep and gloomy enthusiasm of the mystics, who, in their desire for ideal perfection, slight and despise the natural world, they, through admiration and love of that world, teach themselves the love of God. Their doctrine is neither exacting nor difficult; it is easy, simple, benevolent, and suited to the ordinary condition of humanity. Their language requires no effort to comprehend, and they justly claim the merit of appealing to the heart of the multitude. Philanthropic and beneficent philosophers, exalted minds, whom to meet is to love, and the perusal of whose works touches our best and most sacred feelings! Well may it be said, that as a special evidence of grace, those who consecrate their lives to the task of conveying to us a knowledge of the love of God, are themselves most worthy of love, and the most beloved by their fellow men. God forbid that we should seek to turn a single individual from the study of precepts combining evidence, exhortation, and prayer. That which seeks to ameliorate evil, exalt good, and convey to all mankind a knowledge of the Creator and Father of the world, must be salutary and holy. There cannot be a more beautiful subject of contemplation than these souls, imbued with charity, and a fresh flowing fountain of ready sympathy; who look on sin without taint, and feel an involuntary impulsion towards all that is lofty and good. Sincere, compassionate, and generous minds, created to partake and impart happiness; sometimes imprudent and often mistaken, yet proud of errors which result from too exalted an opinion of others. Let us permit these gentle beings, privileged by love, to paint their enchanted world, where all is grand, beautiful, useful, and well-ordered: where there is no terror, and where misfortune never enters. Let us permit them, forgetful of all records of historic injustice, to trace with a charmed vision the uninterrupted

progress of arts, letters, civilisation, and public integrity. Let us leave them in their belief that all mankind are born good and virtuous, and that vice is only an exception and a misfortune. Their illusion, if it be one, approaches nearer the truth than the disenchantment of others. There is enough greatness and harmony in the world,—enough justice in history, and above all in ourselves a sufficient impulse towards good, to warrant and justify their enthusiasm. They lose sight of evil in the world, in history, and in man's heart, just as those, who, climbing a lofty eminence, no longer behold the mire on the way-side. Thus, instead of plunging into detail, they accustom themselves to view the whole from an elevated distance. Hence we deduce that beauty is found in greatness; therefore, the abstract science of metaphysics, when deeply studied and truly understood, has an effect upon the mind similar to that produced by sublime poetry.

The objections raised against this method of demonstrating Providence, bear more upon the extravagances of the optimists than upon the foundation on which their theory is built.

It is demanded of them, Have you positively ascertained this universal state of perfection? The world is very vast compared with our feeble powers: the number of beings it contains is so immense, that the longest enumeration leaves their amount undecided. How much beyond all that we know still remains to be known! Of the many different sciences of which collected science is composed, who can boast of understanding more than one or two, and even of comprehending these thoroughly? Most of the sciences are still in their infancy; their study demands much labour, and, when all that they teach is attained, we discover beyond our farthest point of view an horizon which will supply work to millions of future generations. Were it possible for a single mind, during a single existence, to master all science, all science would but explain one very small corner of the universe. During the two thousand years that have elapsed since the age of Thales and Pythagoras, much has been done, when the present state of knowledge is compared with what it was then; but how little, when the secrets drawn from nature are placed in the balance with those she still retains in her bosom? *

This condition of human learning should not discourage us in the pursuit, but should at least deter us from attempting a

* "Quota pars operis tanti nobis committitur?"—*Seneca, Quæst. Nat.* lib. vii. cap. 30.

summary or drawing a conclusion. Alas! when all we know is proved to be good, we can but conjecture the goodness of what remains unknown.

It is not only the extent of our knowledge that is limited, but its nature also; we know little, but do we even know that little correctly? This is not an argument of scepticism, far from it; but the necessity of knowledge, human pride, and its sister, human frivolity, the custom of accepting as explained that which is only familiar,—all these influences induce a habit of taking comparisons for definitions and conjectures for facts. Sometimes resignation, but more frequently ambition, induces us to be easily satisfied. It is difficult to persuade a chemist that he cannot define matter, a physician that he knows not the nature of extension, or a philosopher that God is incomprehensible. The most puerile doctrines have been gravely taught in the most celebrated schools by men of genius. Let us speak respectfully of the past, for history shows us that modern science is in many instances equally open to contradiction.

When we read in Xenophon the enumeration of the miracles by which Socrates sought to prove the existence of Providence, we find that they are, for the most part, errors, which a more advanced knowledge has rejected. But we need not go so far back; let us take up a volume which has charmed us all in infancy. Without becoming very learned, we can no longer read the "View of Nature," by the Abbé Pluche. We feel at once how unsettled are his views. We look with alarm at the task he undertakes, of proving every thing in the world to be good. Buckland himself, the latest and most scientific amongst these opponents of the existence of evil, stumbles at every step. His system is only thirty years old, but nearly exploded, and we often feel inclined to smile at his fervour. His antagonists have argued that the wolf devours the lamb. The objection is more grave than it appears, and also a very general one, for throughout the world the strong prey upon the weak. Now, what is the reply given by this excellent writer? He says, "Without doubt the wolf eats the lamb, and it is thus that the goodness of Providence is manifested;" for the sheep are always devoured while they are young, fat, and in good condition; so that they escape sickness and old age. If sheep were endowed with reason and could penetrate the future, they would in death bless their carnivorous benefactors.

While apologists turn to declamation and feed upon puerilities,

others, with very different aims, exhaust themselves in fruitless endeavours to expel from the world all that is imperfect, incomplete, and contradictory. They are no less sincere in their complaints than Buckland and Pluche in their excuses. These opposite modes of reasoning form, so to speak, two opposing currents in literature: on one side Gessner's "Idyls," on the other Young's "Night Thoughts." The perusal of the former conveys most satisfaction; but in the latter it is difficult to trace anything but sophistry. We are confounded by the most flagrant contradictions, sometimes the extremest optimism, and at others universal disparagement. It seems strange that these two distinct lines of argument should be equally familiar to us, and that, according to the whim of the moment, we should adopt that which it pleases us to believe, with power to abandon it as our impressions may vary. This induces us to conclude, at the first glance, that there is in all this much sentiment and poetry, but nothing truly scientific.

These are weighty objections: nevertheless, whatever be their force, no one will deny that the profound study of nature produces a feeling of admiration for the Creator. This supplies the evidence of a fact which supersedes reasoning. After all, so much science is not necessary to bestow the capability of admiration. God has ordained that the beauty of his work shall be manifest, both to the simple and the ignorant. All we are required to do, is to open our eyes. A higher degree of knowledge, by rectifying and enlarging our ideas, discovers to us new analogies, new splendours, and increases instead of diminishing our faith. It is wrong to say, "Let us not be too prompt to admire while science is so incomplete;" but, rather, "Since we admire the world of which we know so little, what would be our admiration did we know it better!" The entire fault of the optimists consists in their extremes: because they seek to prove too much, they generally prove nothing. Why take so much trouble? Instead of pretending to explain the existence of evil, and to transform it into good, let us rest satisfied with the knowledge that good, which means order (for in the world good and order are one), overrules disorder and evil, and this not in a degree open to dispute, but to an almost infinite preponderance: thus proofs abound, the most ordinary and superficial observation will discover very solid and very numerous arguments, and all the sciences unite in completing the demonstration. And, in fact, what is the highest aim of science? Is it not explanation

and arrangement? Is it not the substitution of the unity of laws for variety of effects? Is it not the subduing of all obstacles opposed to human intelligence, and compelling them to aid instead of to impede? The world explained by science, understood in its profundity, as governed by general and controlling laws, ameliorated, enriched, subdued, and disciplined, becomes the kingdom of man instead of his prison; and there where the ignorant think they have a right to groan and complain, the truly wise see only cause for admiration and gratitude. The existence of a stupendous plan, and the presence of an omnipotent artificer, will become manifest to their comprehension. They will behold evil without consternation, because they do not expect from the creature a perfection which can only belong to the Creator.

Having thus approached the object of our inquiry, in order to render it more accessible, we shall first demand the evidence of Providence from inanimate nature.

The existence of science proves to itself alone, without entering into details, that the world is well and regularly organised. What is science? The knowledge of general laws. If there is no law, there can be no science. Thus we are compelled to admit, from the moment when we establish the existence of science, that everything is regulated by order. If we are answered that these laws are inevitable, we at once reply, that this is not a self-produced necessity, for infinite power only can create necessity, in virtue of its definition; and likewise that there are laws at the same time true, immutable, and unnecessary. That all which begins to exist must have a cause, is a necessary law. That all bodies should gravitate towards the centre of the earth is not a necessary law, but is not the less a law: and this second law, which might not exist, has been established by the will and intelligence of the Creator of the world. Are there not laws, or rather order, applicable only to a certain number of cases and a certain number of individuals? The question itself is absurd. There are laws of which we are ignorant; but all things have a law. That which we denominate disorder, is more properly a derogation from some known law, through the influence of some law unknown. At our first step in science we say, "I am seeking the law of these phenomena;" we do not say, "I am seeking to discover if these phenomena have a law," for we know that everything in nature depends upon law, all being regular: hence it follows, undeniably, that there is more good than evil in nature. We clearly perceive the good, but nothing proves to us the reality

of the evil. It may be, that what we consider evil would appear good, if our science were more enlightened. This is not only possible, but probable. If we do not say that this is certain, it is only because we cannot affirm it by immediate evidence. It must also be observed, that all that has a law has also an aim: for if a law were applicable to nothing, it would be a mere generalisation without reality. Thus, for example, if I am unacquainted with the law of the phenomena which I desire to retain in mind, I can invent an arbitrary principle of classification to aid my memory. This artificial method is a great relief to me; it is something for my mind to rest upon, since it is a method. Yet it is nothing to the objects which I class; it forms no part of them, neither does it modify them in any manner. The laws of nature are not of this description. All that falls under them is co-ordinately arranged for one actual aim. To say that all is regular, and that all is useful, is to express the same idea twice over. When we affirm that there is no place for chance in the world, it is the same thing as saying that every movement is influenced by one law, and ordained to one end.

All science has for its result the demonstration of this axiom; that everything is regulated, and useful; but we might spare the demonstration. It is an axiom which results from science, and yet precedes, and, in fact, engenders it. It is because we believe in the existence of intention and law that we labour to discover them. We have an innate passion for tracing the secret, or which amounts to the same, the principle of every thing. Place in the hands of a child an automaton or a watch; when he first looks at it, the exterior movement or result satisfies his curiosity; but in a little while he seeks to know the cause, and then he breaks it. The philosopher does the same thing. His plaything is the world. The secret he searches after is that of creation. He generally confines his attention to one being or one class of beings. He circumscribes his curiosity, lest, should he attack the world as a whole, he might be overwhelmed by the greatness of matter; but once penned within the speciality he has selected, his ambition is to comprehend it in every branch, to leave nothing unexplored. He begins by observing and describing, then he classifies; this superficial knowledge soon ceases to satisfy him, and he breaks his plaything to discover in its interior the secret of its existence. The more he sees, the more he desires to see. The learned are insatiable, for beneath each problem solved, a new problem is presented: they resemble travellers

climbing a hill in the hope of reaching the summit, and that point attained they seek to conquer another. What they know, only serves to make them desire further knowledge. When the logician first rises beyond the earth, he has still possessed himself only of certain laws which are most evidently connected with phenomena; he must operate upon these laws, as he has already operated upon the phenomena they control; he must laboriously struggle on to the attainment of higher and more universal laws, and so from one degree to another, till he has mastered the supreme law which explains all the rest, for it contains them all in one magnificent synthesis. What can sustain him in this undertaking? an anticipated vision of universal harmony: an hypothesis at the commencement, a doctrine at the termination.

While our thoughts dwell upon this collective work, so varied, yet unparalleled, commenced two thousand years ago, and since then pursued with unrelaxing vigour, we seem to behold all the artizans of human science at their labours. One gathers plants, dries, and classifies them. Another penetrates the earth to draw forth its minerals. Another decomposes bodies to arrive at the simple elements which form the primary composition of all substance. His whole existence consists in watching his furnace, and his crucibles, for ever marvelling, for ever attracted. On his journey he sometimes encounters fame and fortune, but the great object of his search is science; if he pauses for enjoyment, the true aim of his existence ceases. To attain the conquest of this secret of God, which he can write in a single page, or sum up in a single line, he surrenders up his youth, his health, risks his life, and is not even aware of his sacrifice. There are those who resolutely abandon their native country at the age when love is strongest; they leave all for desert lands; they travel thousands of miles without encountering a beaten track; they swim through the waves of the deep; they escape as by miracle from ferocious animals; they live for years in solitude, or in the midst of savages; perhaps they die in the wilderness without leaving a name behind them; but sometimes more fortunate, they return to civilised society bringing back with them an additional world.

When the Almighty sends a pestilence upon earth, two classes of men repair to the hospital, the one to console and succour, the other to learn; heroes of humanity and heroes of science. All these men, from Thales down to ourselves, and from us to our latest posterity, these travellers in deserts, these physicians in their amphitheatres, these chemists in their laboratories, and these

mariners in the midst of ice-bergs, are brethren by the unity of the aim they follow. The world reveals itself through them. Science conquers, and ignorance retires. Daily their hands dispense something to enlighten, console, and sustain the multitude. Body and soul, we depend upon and live through them. What signifies it that they are slighted or calumniated? They are in themselves the mind and progress of humanity. Socrates drinks hemlock, Aristotle is forced to slay himself, Plato is sold, Zeno is only a gardener, Epictetus a slave: such are the great philosophers of Greece. We must seek those of a later age in dungeons and at the stake; Abelard, Savonarola, Christopher Columbus, and Galileo. Even as late as the commencement of the seventeenth century, Giordano Bruno and Vanini were condemned to be burnt, Descartes died in Sweden, Spinoza was proscribed, and Rousseau driven from one asylum to another. But dungeons, scaffolds, and proscriptions, like crowns and triumphs, are only accidents. Truth consists in conquering truth, in rectifying error, in the revelation of method, the bursting of fetters, and the development of strength. Tyrants and the mob may league together, their victories are nothing. They crush man, but science remains. When each has excavated his particular vein and discovered his portion of golden ore, the philosopher arises, who is to collect these scattered riches into one heap. He scans history entire, he gathers from all the sciences, he discovers universal analogy, and through analogy by unity he recognises many different laws, all proceeding from one higher law, on which they are founded. He comprehends that they vary according to the variety of objects, but they ever bear the impress of one thought and one mighty will. He hears, as we may say, the word that gives life to the world, and which every movement and every form of creation translate into their own language.

Thus nature is revealed to him complete and uniform under the variety of her phenomena. With equal facility he mounts and descends the ladder of dialectics, invisible to the vulgar eye, which has the immense and diversified miracles of creation for its base, and the power of God for its summit. In this universal co-ordination all is evident, useful, and, consequently, beautiful. The plan of nature presents itself before him in its perfect grandeur and unity; he beholds the mark of the divine workman in each detail and in the stupendous whole.

If we quit nature for man, the scene becomes more complicated. It is properly here that evil appears under its two-fold

form—suffering and error. But we must begin by first tracing the unity, and subsequently examine the disorder.

Man has a double nature; he partakes both of heaven and earth. Let us first study him in his humblest aspect, in his analogy with creatures of an inferior order to himself.

This is nature's invariable process with all created things: first she provides for their preservation, next for the continuation of their species, finally she assigns them a function and a locality; thus she establishes duration, stability, and unity in the world.

In inorganic creation she directly charges herself, if we may so term it, with the preservation of individuals and species by the laws she imposes on them; but in the higher class of beings she accepts individuals themselves as auxiliaries, and forms within them principles which tend to preserve and propagate. Thus, a tree is not only obedient, like all other bodies, to the physical laws of nature, but it is increased, developed, and preserved by nutrition; it reproduces itself by its seed, and this double power at once makes it a living being.

The existence of animals is more complete, because they enter with more spontaneity and efficacy into this double function of organised being. It is seen that brute nature submissively yields to law, and that the plant develops a power, every phase of which is unchangeably pre-ordained; while the power of the animal depends in a certain measure upon the mysterious faculty which we denominate instinct. Thus, as often as we rise in the scale of beings, we find individuals possess within themselves a more extended power, or power of a higher order.

All laws applicable to the inferior class exist in the individual in a more perfect degree, but in some manner combined with a new law, which bestows upon the being that at once contains and is governed by it, a greater degree of unity and perfection.

The human body, equally with inorganic substances, is subject to the physical laws which govern matter. It develops itself like the plant, and possesses the motive power of the animal. But, placed at the head of all created beings, man possesses a quality essentially different from those of the plant or even of the animal, and the innate characteristic of which is the uncontrolled exercise of itself. This single fact enables us to understand all human nature; for nothing can voluntarily pursue an aim without recognising and loving it. Even had we no mission in the world beyond our individual safety, and the continuation of

our species, the uncontrolled accomplishment of this task requires of necessity that man should be perfectly intelligent and sensitive.

We all know that food is necessary to preserve life, but how do we know it? Nature communicates the fact. In what language? In the language of pleasure and of pain. By pain she tells us that we require to eat; by pleasure she instructs us what food to select. We soon learn that insufficient or excessive nourishment are equally detrimental to our frail machine; that certain dishes are wholesome, others detrimental, and that our repasts should be at regular intervals. Experience teaches us this without the aid of physicians; but nature does not confide in our experience, she does not even trust to the interest we have in prolonging our existence, and preserving ourselves from disease; she undertakes to settle the hour of refreshment by the periodical return of appetite; and when our wants are satisfied, she very intelligibly announces that it is time to retire. It is true, we do not always listen to her voice, but it is equally true, that she never fails in her warning.

It would be difficult not to perceive in this arrangement of nature the traces of a provident wisdom. The indulgences which compromise health are maladies of the mind before they become diseases of the body; and when the rule is applied to free subjects, it must not be judged by the extravagances of liberty.

Liberty interferes more in the operations of a class than in those of an individual. No matter how it may act upon hunger and thirst, it can only rebel against law to a certain limited extent; but in all that appertains to love, it shows itself most unbridled. The human species would perish without the enjoyment of love; but this gratification is so vivid that it leads into excess all who are not accustomed to restrain their inclinations. Nevertheless, the rule is evident in spite of excess, even as regards those who transgress; and what proves the vigilance and clear-sightedness of Providence is, that the wisest and most stringent laws which the coldest reason has been able to establish, always accord with those of nature, when nature is not vitiated by custom. It is possible that this truth may not at once appear evident to minds such as ours, long accustomed to give way to passion, and too far removed from the healthy and sound inspirations of nature; but every just mind and well regulated heart will feel its full force upon reflection.

If love is the great promoter of human error, let us acknowledge in it a principle which gives evidence of our superiority, and conveys our first glimpse of the true destiny of man. We are

speaking here of love, considered merely as the sentiment provided by nature for the propagation of species. While we degrade it to this definition, do we not feel that something great and holy is wounded within us? In man love is a complex feeling, and this physical element to which we allude, forms so very small a portion of the combined sensation, that in treating of love we almost entirely lose sight of it, to dream exclusively of the ennobling emotion, so pure, so radiant, so intoxicating, of which we do not say that it is full of poetry, for it is poetry itself; by which common minds are elevated to a knowledge of devotion, inspiration, and heroism; which fills the coldest hearts with generosity and purifies them as by fire; which doubles and trebles existence, and tears aside the dark veil which obscures the glory of heaven; which is so great, that it appears the source of all greatness in the heart of man; so powerful, that it triumphs alike over our weakness and our strength; so consistent, despite our failings, that in the world it alone leads us to the conviction of the infinite; the only one, perhaps, amidst all our feelings which we can truly acknowledge as an inspirer and a consolation. We encounter love at every step; for, though it has but one source and end, it reveals itself under many names and in different forms; it pervades all human life; it connects us with God, society, and the world; it forms the unity of existence, its charm, explanation, and blessing. Here, even when we behold its birth in the humblest sphere of human necessities, it comes surrounded by other affections, the names of which are equally attractive. Such are all the tender emotions which render the family tie so endearing; conjugal, paternal, filial, and fraternal love. While we thus look into our own hearts, let gratitude teach us to admire and adore God. Let us truly learn that which is of such importance to the world, to society, and to families; the stern duties imposed upon the father, and the heroic devotion peculiar to the mother. Let us try thoroughly to understand the daily, hourly and momentary sacrifices, the sleepless nights, the incessant toil, the solicitude, the tenderness, and the more difficult courage. All this is necessary to form a true man, and all this is required by patriotism, humanity, and morality. It is so! but the heart also counsels, and renders these duties easy: the heart transforms them into delights, and delights which have no rivals under heaven: the heart, which means nature, the good mother and gentle nurse of humanity: the thousand-fold blessed strength which dwells in our innermost being, like the voice and bounty of the Creator. He

who thinks of the family tie, who feels the sweetness and beauty of family relationship, needs no other proof than this that the hand which has made us is truly a paternal one. O God! O Parent of the world! thy providence will for ever be adored and comprehended by the heart of a father!

After having contemplated man in the humblest position of his task, which concerns only his individual protection and the preservation of his species, we must now seek to discover his destiny upon earth, and his future beyond the tomb. Correctly understood, these two problems resolve themselves into one. God has given us two lives, distinct, but depending one upon the other; the first is the struggle, the second the reward. It requires no profound meditation to discover the destiny of man: conscience demonstrates it with equal clearness to philosophic minds, and to the humblest intellect. I am free, but I possess a law: this law when I look at it in myself, bears the denomination of justice: when I seek it at its source, its name is God. To obey God with all my power, to love, to know, and to approach him; in these few words is comprised the sum of my destiny.

What do I require for its fulfilment? Knowledge of duty in its principle and application, love which will attach itself to the creature only to attain strength and rise more resolutely to the Creator, and an unlimited free will. Are these my possessions? Am I this unfettered being? intelligent, passionate, capable of comprehending the end of existence, of advancing to it through sacrifice, and of winning, by personal exertion, a reward that never can be too dearly purchased? I require no science to answer this question: thought, feeling, and will, comprise my entire being. What is the process of thought? First to reflect upon myself, for if I do not know myself, what can I know? I must be satisfied of my own existence that I may be able to affirm other existences. I know, see and feel, all that passes within me. I am acquainted with something beyond these phenomena, for I am aware that there must be a power that produces them; I calculate the range of this power; I am sensible of its exhaustion or renewal according to requirement; I can concentrate, impel, or restrain it; and each time I proportion my effort to the resistance I anticipate. This intuitive knowledge is my first intellectual faculty: I give it the name of conscience. Knowing myself, and knowing also that I am a being of limited faculties, I see everywhere around me other beings contingent and ephemeral as I am. My life is a perpetual struggle against external forces, in which

I alternately conquer and yield. The faculty by which I distinguish these opposing powers is denominated perception.

Have I no conception of anything but myself and the world? If there were nothing beyond the world, (for as regards myself I am but a portion of it), it could neither be, nor be understood. For it to exist, something more than itself is necessary, and for it to be understood, something beyond the conviction of the senses. The world and the impressions it produces are of a vague and transitory description; they doubtless belong to, but they do not comprise, existence. There is within me a third faculty, which leads me from dreams, brings me to precision and reality; and if we may be permitted to use the phrase, bestows substance upon everything else. This is the faculty of *Reason*, supreme endowment, aspiring to unravel all the immutable truths which form the principles of being and knowledge, the object and end of love, and the rule of liberty.

Imperfect ourselves, we comprehend all things imperfectly, but in proportion to our necessities. We behold God without comprehending him, and in main points we do not comprehend ourselves. The insignificance of our organs, and in fact the feeble extent of human faculties, contracts our horizon; but nevertheless there exists within us an intelligence which reaches beyond the time and space that we actually occupy. Every moment of a well-employed life is a victory over time and space, and consequently an increase of being. We have memory to retain the past, induction to lead to the future, deduction by which we develop principles, abstraction which brings distinct objects to one point of view, generalisation which raises us by degrees from multiplied creation to unity, and imagination which consoles us with hope for the necessarily narrow bounds within which human knowlege is circumscribed. Faculties so accordant, so closely connected, so dependent one upon the other, so abundant in discoveries and attractions, which place animals and natural forces in subjection to man, which embrace the creation and rise even to the contemplation of God, are they not the proof of one great plan designed by the author of our being? What name, except that of *Providence*, will accord with the cause of this order and regularity, this unvarying agreement between the means and the end?

If I were merely a being of intelligence,—if I could only see and understand, and did not possess the property of loving, I should remain inactive, in a state of quiescence, which would look upon the existence of facts, truths, and principles, with absolute

indifference. It is necessary that I should rejoice and suffer, love and hate, in order to make me desire. Reason gives me a rule, but passion bestows the impulse.

When we abandon the cold and severe world of reflection to enter the tragic regions of passion, the first thing that strikes us is, that here again, with the same affinities, we encounter the same divisions and the same analogies. As our intellect applies itself to three objects,—to God through reason, to ourselves through conscience, and to the exterior world through perception, thus collectively embracing all beings and all affinities, so is the heart divided by three affections,—love of God, love of self, and love of the world. Passion takes many shapes, but no matter how clothed, or under what name disguised, every human passion is but a changed condition of one of these three affections. We differ much one from the other; but there exists not a man who cannot find this triple love at the bottom of his heart. The moment arrives when even the selfish egotist feels its softening influence. But he whose whole life is a sacrifice—who counts hours by his good deeds—who has no occupation but that of seeking and relieving the unfortunate—no happiness but philanthropy—no ambition but the amelioration of his brother's condition:—God has ordained that this man shall find compensation even in the fulfilment of his mission; he feels that there is gratification in self-denial, and his efforts to promote general happiness unite him more closely with humanity, without interfering with his importance.

In conclusion, the love of God is so necessary a sentiment, that it may be found even in the bosom of the atheist. We may slight, forget, or deny God, but not to love him is impossible.* In vain do we seek not to think of him; it is only through his love for God that man is capable of feeling poetry and enthusiasm. That which we call the ideal, is, though unknown to us, the abandonment of earth and the aspiration towards Deity. What man has ever been so buried that he has no dreams of any thing beyond what he sees and touches? What night was ever so dark that no single flash of lightning has brightened it? More than one have gone to sleep atheists and woke up mystics. The cold flint contains the internal spark. Thus, by a beautiful dispensation, our minds and hearts are formed upon a similar plan, and carefully suited to our wants and affinities.† This

* See Note at the end.

† "Thou thyself, miserable mortal, insignificant as thou art, formest a

is not the only analogy. If it were possible for us in this place to examine psychology, we should be able to prove how, in the system of intelligence, individual and absolute existence form the opposite and necessary poles of thought; how thoughts possess reality by their affinity with the idea of the absolute, and precision by their affinity with the idea of individuality; in such manner that neither reason, which is the internal sense through which we receive the impression of the absolute, nor conscience, which is the inward faculty through which we derive the impression of individuality, can ever be absent from any of our intellectual operations: and we could afterwards show that the same principle applies to our love for God and our love for ourselves;*—first, to our love for God, since God is no less the source of all that is amiable, than the cause of universal existence; and secondly, to our love for ourselves, as by virtue of the law which enforces self-preservation, we cannot obliterate or bury ourselves in love.

These three affections, which are in fact the components from whence the heart is moulded, divide and change themselves into a multitude of sentiments and passions, the study of which would lead us at each step to bless and adore Providence. The subject is so inexhaustible, that we cannot permit ourselves to do more than indulge in a passing reference.

We have seen that man is instructed by his appetites to provide for the preservation of himself and his species. Every pleasure and every pain renders him an analogous service. When not depraved by an evil indulgence of his liberty, or by his individual vices, his pleasure is generally produced by that which is salutary, and his pain by that which is injurious to him.

For example, exercise, the moderate exertion so essential to the health of mind and body, is accompanied by a sensation of pleasure; while fatigue is a pain which warns us of the exhaustion of our strength and the necessity of invigoration by repose. The same rule would apply in all our relations with mankind, if we only sought to govern ourselves better; and Nature incessantly warns us, that for our punishment we shall become incapable of consulting, and unable to comprehend her.

portion of the universal system, and hast with it an incessant affinity. The universe does not exist for thee, but thou thyself existest for the universe."—*Plato, Laws*, book x.

* "I affirm that the heart naturally loves universal being, and as naturally loves its own being."—*Pascal, Thoughts*, Art. 24, edit. Havet., p. 296.

If we wish to behold a dominion where Nature reigns all-powerful, we must glance at the first and holiest instincts of family affection. Let us suppose that the mother had no love for her child; this alone would suffice to destroy humanity, The legislator might institute laws; but no matter how sternly they might be enforced, could he compel the devotion an infant requires? If we find in an asylum for orphans something of the maternal sentiment, the objects towards which it is directed enjoy the advantage, but have not created it. Maternal love exists in the heart of every woman, and for this sole reason the wife regards having no family as the greatest misfortune of her life. If we dare utter words which, wrongly interpreted, would seem to diminish the grandeur and beauty of the mission of these adoptive parents, we might almost say that the children who could not live without them are also necessary to their lives; they bestow upon them the double privileges of love and sacrifice. A woman should be seen by the cradle of an infant, whether the offspring of her own bosom, or one that she has adopted as her own, poor and naked, to bestow upon it all her time and tenderness.

Women will be adored and deified as long as youth and passion shall endure; but all their grace and beauty, the charms of their minds, and the attraction of their conversation, render them less worthy of our respect and love, than that small cradle which they prefer to all the rest of the world.

Family affection is not sufficient for man: we are one fraternity and all need one another. Placed here below to fulfil a common destiny, to endure the same ills, enjoy the same pleasures, and journey to the same end, moral rectitude, or if the name is preferred, the will of God, ordains that we shall lean one upon the other, fight shoulder to shoulder the battle of life, and give to our fellow men a portion of the wealth which is most our own and least factitious; that which we inherit from God and ourselves, and not from society or human institutions: our physical and intellectual powers, our intelligence and our eloquence. If reason alone inculcated this law, we could understand its wisdom and necessity, but should be far from discovering its charm. Reason prescribes sacrifice without allowing the smallest compromise of its severity, sometimes to an extent almost unmerciful. Nature therefore has placed within us, as a companion to every law, a sentiment which inspires the inclination to do what necessity enforces, and renders the performance at the same time agreeable. She cares for the

orphan, for those who are abandoned by their family, for the rare natures whose hearts seek even beyond the precincts of the domestic hearth, for other congenial souls that can sympathise with theirs; and she has endowed us with the important, manly and controlling feeling, which forms a bond so much the more powerful that its condition is esteem, and its principle virtue,—friendship;—which doubles our capacity both to act and to endure, and gives us, in our chosen companion, a second heart and another conscience. Thus nature by degrees widens the sphere of our love in proportion to that of duty, and we learn progressively that our relationship extends beyond our own immediate family to all mankind.* Upon the same principle she attaches us to the earliest associations of our lives, and clothing the recollections of youth and childhood with an unfading charm, she creates many invincible bonds, from community of habits, laws, and faith; and by a secret magic reveals to us all the beauty and sanctity contained in the name of country. She renders us susceptible of pity, which teaches us to tender the hand of kindliness to the stranger, and measure the benefits we bestow only by the necessities that demand them. She inspires us with gratitude that we may find consolation even in excess of misery, for it is also one of the greatest blessings of life, to feel that we are protected and sustained, and to kiss the relieving hand with fervour and thankfulness. And, as by the strength of our intelligence, through which the forces of Nature are submitted to our control, and we become masters of the future, our sphere of action is infinitely more extended than our horizon, Nature has not desired that our feelings of benevolence should be confined to those with whom we are acquainted, or to the calamities which fall under our actual observation. She has kindled within us a fire which burns of itself. In our love, we embrace all human nature, men whom we may never meet or know but by their evil offices, and generations as yet unborn. In truth, all these affections, which are our richest treasures, are not lit up by the same flame in every heart. The more their object becomes extended and remote, in the same proportion the minds by which they are controlled, become more restricted in number. But if the family tie is the most universal and most powerful, because the most immediately necessary, there

* "Ut profectus à caritate domesticorum ac suorum, serpat longius, et se implicit primum civium, deinde omnium mortalium societate."—*Cicero, On Good and Evil*, book ii. chap. xiv.

is no heart destitute of a general love for human nature. Nothing in the composition of one man can be wanting in another. Everything within us speaks of the goodness of God, and denies the melancholy and harsh hypothesis of a negligent or indifferent deity. The desire of esteem, which is often degraded into vanity; the thirst for power, frequently condemned with justice, under the title of ambition; these propensities if we know how to limit and discipline them under rule, assist in the construction of society, by the introduction of honour and shame, and by rendering power attractive, which in its nature, is merely a burden. During the latter ages of Rome, public offices had become so oppressive, that the citizens requested as a favour to be excluded from municipal dignities. It is an infallible symptom of decline, when instead of courting human feelings and rendering them generally useful, the legislature opposes, contradicts, and offends them. We ought to live by turning Nature and its resources to account, for Nature is wise and wisely organised. Not only does she assist us through the aid of the passions, and transform our duties into pleasures; but these allurements by which we are solicited to fulfil our mission, like a kind and prudent mother, she proportions to our weakness. When she foresees that an impulse of too refined and exalted a character is not sufficiently active to rouse us from our lethargy, she adds some moving power of a more personal description, and of more immediate energy. What object can a man propose to himself superior to that of bestowing upon humanity a new science, and consequently an accession of strength? But the mere love of human nature is not always influential enough to command a whole life of sacrifices which may produce no beneficial result. If this impelling cause should prove insufficient, truth itself steps in as an additional incitement. The philosopher perhaps forgets the fruits of science, but he has still an internal impulse which urges him on, at every hazard, to discover truth, although his discovery may be useless.

A school was formed at the commencement of the present century, which, starting upon the foundation that there is nothing useless in nature, and consequently in man, denounced all existing customs and rules, as replete with every description of impediment and shackle; and proposed to replace civilisation, the spring of which is law, by a new organisation, the sole principle of which should be pleasure. The school overflowed with errors. The greatest of all was, an attempt to consider this life

as a definitive end, and to suppress the trial. It deceived itself again by supposing that the moving impulse could take the place of the rule; and this mistake led to the deplorable consequence of denying moral obligation. It was wrong even in the analysis of the passions, which it deified, and in the search after pleasure, which it considered the *summum bonum*; so difficult is it to deal with these sweeping innovations, which, amongst other disadvantages, entirely cast aside experience. But in some respects the school was right; for all sentiments inspired by Nature are sound and profitable. It is equally the duty of the moralist and legislator to respect and render them useful; society and mankind can only exist through them; they are the instruments of good and the auxiliaries of virtue; and the suppression of a natural feeling, be it what it may, invariably tends to reduce and degrade the character of man.

For us, who cannot comprehend liberty without law, virtue without sacrifice, or existence on earth without futurity, we require that passion should be at the same time admitted and regulated; that the heart should be honoured and praised in its character of servant to the moral will; and that the exhibition of the vices which man has given to himself should not annul the strength and virtue which he has derived from God.

Before quitting the subject of meditation on the human passions, which can never be exhausted, we ought to endeavour to trace them in their various transformations. Destiny, in this world, carries us where no one can calculate. We are only masters of ourselves, but serve as playthings to events. In the sudden changes of fortune, to which we are all exposed, we seldom indeed find wanting within our hearts a fresh and living strength to assist us under new and unexpected trials. We do not here refer to common feelings, the epoch and hour of which are marked in ordinary life—such as paternal love: the peculiar sentiments we are now speaking of have received no distinct name in any language, because they require no generalisation, and seem to take birth from accidents. A *parvenu* bears himself with appropriate demeanour in an elevated position; and the crowd remarks, "Who would have suspected him of so much dignity?" The fact is, he had it not, but God has bestowed it upon him with his advancement. Let us make the same reflection in an opposite sense. In a romance, the description of a dreadful calamity overwhelms the mind, and we wonder how any one could endure it; let it fall upon ourselves, and we are

enabled to bear the trial. We did not possess this courage; but the same God has sent us resignation with misfortune. He has given us even more than resignation,—new sentiments suited to our new necessities. It seems as if with change of position our hearts were simultaneously altered. A traveller in Siberia has remarked with what facility the condemned criminals transform themselves, to assimilate their bodies, minds, and feelings to their new situations. A nobleman of exalted rank, accustomed to all the luxuries and refinements of wealth, issues some morning from a fortress, without name, family, or money. He is marched off, with a knapsack on his back, to serve for life as a private soldier in the army of the Caucasus, or towards some district in Siberia to labour as a colonist, or to fill a subordinate post or public office. The state of existence is entirely new, and has nothing in common with his former life, yet he finds the necessary courage, aptitude, and strength. In this, great credit has been assigned to the extraordinary flexibility of the Russian character; but we have all something of this within us; our nature changes, to a certain degree, with inevitable circumstances and necessity. We resemble a ship well provided with stores of every kind, which has spare tackle in all the magazines, ready to be used when the machinery gets out of order; which has the materials to construct a jury-mast when disabled, and the deck of which, at the last moment, can be converted into a raft. Will the passenger who owes his life to this foresight, waste time in questioning it, while profiting by its efficacy?

But what proves even more than love and intelligence, the greatness of the design of God in the creation of man, is liberty. We need not ask what liberty would be without intelligence; for, to desire, we must know that we desire, and what we desire, and consequently that we possess a mind capable of thought. But in order to desire, it is not alone necessary to think; it is equally essential to love; for reason points the road, but inclination induces us to follow it. Thus intelligence and love are requisite to liberty; but liberty, in turn, is also indispensable to the heart and the thought. The action is the object, and for this the thought exercises itself, and the heart warms. Without resolution, our thought and desire would be lost, as if they had never existed. They assume, in some measure, a material substance, they occupy a place and become a reality, by the spontaneous operation of which they are the origin and determining cause. Such is the necessary bond, which under these three exercises of human

faculty, to think, to love, and to act, constitute a single unity. Dissatisfied minds have sought to discover in liberty a diminution of our being. It is true that liberty leads to error. But, in the first place, error does not naturally belong to liberty. Love may be deceived in its object, or change to hatred. It may become absorbing, or excessive. It has, besides, inseparable failings; like every other element of our being, it is subject to fatigue and exhaustion. Intelligence, made for the discovery of truth, can never grasp it at once, but only by degrees, and through constant effort. The most concentrated attention is necessary to penetrate truths of a high order, and by an inseparable re-action, weariness, after a certain period, dims the perspicuity of the mind. Let us not therefore assert that liberty alone engenders evil. Evil is everywhere found in man, by the side of good, in consequence of the limited nature of his existence. If we were even to compare our respective faculties to decide on the most pre-eminent, liberty alone has no boundaries, for its entire essence consists in being or not being, without any possible degree between the two terms. It is true that to constitute liberty, it is not merely sufficient to will; there must be the power of accomplishing the will; and in this power we are limited in various ways; externally by the weakness of our means of execution, internally by the enervating struggles of the passions, which divide and exhaust, on a thousand occasions, our faculties of active exertion; and, finally, by the lassitude which results from the frequent recurrence of the effort. We become tired of acting, and of wishing to act. The weariness of the master co-exists with that of the agent. My arm is tired; my will is not less so. There I find myself again, in my weakness; but in the resolution itself, in the act of willing, my liberty is, and remains, absolute.

It is, therefore, a mistake to impute to liberty an evil common to, and inherent in all created things. Everything that is made, all that has proceeded from a cause, all that does not contain within itself the principle of its existence, has limits, which is precisely to say, that it has imperfections. The true question is to ascertain whether liberty is intended to produce good or ill. Now, it is certainly intended for good, and whatever sophistry may attempt to establish to the contrary, every individual conscience whispers it, and the conscience of all human nature proclaims it loudly. Liberty is, therefore, good in itself, and the greatest of all goods.

Certain disciples of mysticism, without confounding, as do the

sceptics we have alluded to, the abuse of anything with the thing itself, and while admitting with us, that liberty in a sound and well regulated mind, almost always produces good, and never evil but as the exception, still condemn liberty, either through an erroneous assimilation of human and divine nature, or through ignorance of the destiny of man, and the laws of creation. They fall into the first error in consequence of adopting the opinion of Malebranche, and of nearly all the mystical schools, that God lowered himself by the act of creation; as if they did not perceive that it is impossible to depart from absolute perfection without a fall, while an imperfect being, who should condemn himself to immobility, would at the same time be condemned to imperfection without advance. Again, they fall into the second error, through believing that the whole mission of man is comprised in not transgressing. It is an offence against God to reduce human nature to this condition. If all our efforts were confined to doing no wrong, God would have produced a useless and pernicious creation. There is not in the entire world an existence absolutely passive. Everything is action, and for that reason everything is great; and we, whose action is free, are for that reason at the head of all creation. To think and to pray, without action, is to fail in the true vocation of man. The sort of meditation and worship which God desires, is that which, by a discovery of the divine perfection, learns to be useful and operative. He has never bestowed power to be annihilated by inactivity. Every human action may be considered under two different views: in its immediate object, and in its relation to duty. Let us consider it first in its ostensible end: all here is humble, apportioned to our narrow wants, our passions, our daily avocations, by which we are absorbed, and man is nothing more than man. Take the act in its connection with duty, and the most unpretending, obscure, and contemptible function partakes of something divine, and has the attributes of meditation and prayer. It appears like an homage rendered to him from whom we derive our liberty, and also our sense of justice; for the second gift is not inferior to the first, and God is equally our benefactor in imposing duties and supplying us with the means of performing them.

It is one of the finest reflections of Aristotle, that the dignity of every being increases with his duties, and is to be measured according to the extent of his task. "The senate," says Seneca, "have been assembled since the morning, and employed without interval in the public good, while the populace are drinking in

taverns, or amusing themselves in the field of Mars." * Action and fulfilled duty can alone elevate man above his brother men. Even misfortune becomes dignity when endured with fortitude, because it evinces courage. He whose life passes in unvarying happiness, resembles a combatant traversing the arena without encountering an adversary who will condescend to encounter him. To endure and to act is to live and be a man. The head of a nation, whose life is passed in responsibility and action, is the greatest of men, while the despot who thinks only of himself is the least.†

Thus, liberty, far from being the origin of disorder in the composition of man, is essentially a benefit. The inconveniences to which it gives rise are amply repaid by the corresponding advantages. Sometimes the part assigned to it on this earth is not confined only to what concerns mankind and human society. The presence of such an intelligent spectator in the world, such a co-operator with the forces of nature, cannot be regarded as an episode. The organic and inorganic phenomena of the world are so disposed as to furnish food to our activity; the absence of man would render a vast number of them inexplicable. If man had no existence, the world would resemble one of the palaces which have been restored and refurnished after a revolution, that they may be preserved to history and art. All has resumed its place, the council-table, the crown, the sceptre; nothing is absent but the king.

We have as yet discoursed only of liberty in its worldly character. There are doubtless solid reasons why even those who have no belief in a future existence, regard free will as one of the greatest benefits we have received; but to others who, like ourselves, entertain a steadfast faith in the life to come, of which freedom is at once the property and the pledge, there is no necessity to vindicate the sublimity of liberty, for in their estimation it constitutes the entire greatness of man. The aspect and character of life are completely changed when, instead of regarding it as a definitive evil, we look upon it only as a state of intermediate trial. It is recorded that during the reign of terror there was a chamber of registration in every prison in Paris, which the condemned were compelled to enter before they

* "Labor optimos citat. Senatus per totum diem sæpe consulitur, quum illo tempore vilissimus quisque, aut in campo otium suum oblectet, aut in popina lateat, aut tempus in aliquo circulo terat."—*Seneca, De Providentiâ.*

† *Plato, Republic,* book ix. Translation of V. Cousin, vol. x. p. 224.

proceeded to assume the habiliments of execution. Each awaited their turn while the relatives and advocates of other prisoners were admitted into the same place. Despair was painted on every countenance, and no exterior indication pointed out who were pardoned or who condemned. It is thus that we differ in this life, no matter how apparently similar; and, according to our individual faith, every hour brings us nearer to death or immortality.

While we are thus endeavouring to point out the Providence of God in his works, we are ever distressed by the consideration that we are able to say so little upon a subject demanding so much. But this little is sufficient to prove the indissoluble connection of all great principles, and is amply satisfactory to the religious soul. If we reduce everything in the world to mere matter, and in man to the satisfying of his wants and egotistical pleasures, such a process may possibly lead us to overlook and forget God; though the existence of the world without a cause to produce and preserve it, should remain an unsolved problem: but if we are capable of listening to the harmonies of nature; if we look upon the phenomena of physical order, as the regular and powerful development of a system of analogous and connected laws; if we regard all the ideas of man, and all his affections as emanating from the one idea, and love of the infinite; if we feel that liberty is but the power of rendering life glorious and sanctified through sacrifice; if we found the greatness of man upon the austere fulfilment of duty, instead of the enjoyment of pleasure; if we have learned to regard man as one family, to acknowledge, prefer, and practice the doctrine of universal fraternity; if we have faith in the never ceasing progress of the human mind, through liberty and labour, to new discoveries in science, to greater civilisation and purity of manners, and laws more in conformity with the light of the divine ideal, which shines in the consciences of the just; if we experience an internal conviction, necessity, and promise of immortality;—all our feelings, doctrines, and instincts will satisfy us that there is a superintending Providence. The conviction will impress itself upon us everywhere, and in every moment of our lives. We shall find the great Worker alone and complete in the most insignificant of his works.

We ought not to reject this line of argument, because since the origin of philosophy, it has been looked upon as a sort of commonplace. The same applies to prayer; nevertheless, we do not

become weary of prayer. The truly religious man is a lover of Providence, and can never be satiated by the study and exaltation of the spirit that he adores. He worships infinite wisdom and power in their smallest details; but when he contemplates the mighty whole, his reverence is unbounded; it is then that he compares one law with another to convince himself of their analogy, and to discover that all classes of being, form, and motion, are but different translations of the one WORD, and varied applications of the one WILL. This simplicity mingled with profusion, this immobility in motion, this eternity amidst the crowded and fleeting waves of time, is God himself, who unveils his majestic nature, and holds direct communication with the soul that seeks him. As in the morning we behold a fog floating over the surface of one vast horizon, when pierced by the sun's rays, disperse and reveal to us the living and enchanted land which lies behind, bathed in light; so philosophy drives away false appearances, unsound theories, and vulgar, perishable attractions, to display to our sight the eternal source whence flow unceasingly strength, beauty and existence.

CHAPTER II.

EXAMINATION OF THE OBJECTIONS DRAWN FROM THE EXISTENCE OF EVIL.

"Tu non dubitas de Providentiâ sed quereris . . . . Inter bonos viros ac Deum amicitia est, conciliante virtute."—*Seneca, De Providentiâ.*

One of the calamities of human weakness is, that when we have convinced ourselves that there is a superintending Providence, and have only just begun to enjoy the consoling thought that God watches over us with the tenderness of a father, instead of feeling thankful for the benefits he has bestowed, we demand the reason why he has seen fit to withhold others.

Even those who are believers in Providence murmur at the existence of evil; and this affords an argument to the irreligious, who say, "None can desire evil unless they are wicked, nor involuntarily commit evil unless they are powerless." This doctrine obliges us either to account for the existence of evil, or to renounce our belief in Providence.

To the question, "How can evil exist?" the stoics replied, "It cannot exist." They treated evil and pain as the Eleatics did multiplicity and motion—not being able to explain, they denied them. On the other hand, a great number of religious sects have in some measure bestowed a divine origin on evil in attributing its existence to a living principle always at variance with the principle of good. Their mistake lies in setting aside reason and attaching themselves solely to fact—that of the stoics in sacrificing fact to the rules of logic.

Besides these two doctrines,—which are not solutions, since the first denies one of the terms which contradict themselves, and the second accepts the contradiction and yields to it—there are three celebrated theories which still divide the minds of men: the theory of the fall, of progression, and of optimism.

We shall first say a few words upon the doctrine of the fall.

To understand this question, we must start from the precise

point of the difficulty. What it becomes necessary to explain is not the cause of physical ills or deformities, which is easily arrived at, but the origin of pain and moral evil; and further, we must understand that pain and moral evil are the necessary consequences of human liberty. In fact, to be free is to possess the power of choice, and of choosing between good and evil. This power of choice supposes the interference of pleasure and of pain; thus there are but two alternatives: to do away, at once, with pain, moral evil, and liberty; or to preserve liberty with its origin and consequences.

Which is best? We reply with confidence, liberty. Then there is no difficulty in ascribing a place to moral evil and pain; the only obstacles are that this place is too great, that the tendency to evil is too strong, the charm and reward of virtue insignificant and weak, pain intolerable, and unequally or unjustly distributed. We have, therefore, to deal less with the actual thing itself, than with the degree in which it exists.

We should consent to suffer evil, but not so much evil. God has not dealt to us equitable measure: he has sold us our liberty at too high a price. In this state of temptation and suffering where he has placed us, we can no longer behold in him the ideal perfection of goodness and power. It is to this difficulty thus restricted that the doctrine of the fall replies, and which may be explained as follows:—

God has made man imperfect, because there cannot be two Gods. He has endowed him with all the perfections that an imperfect creature can possess. Free will is one of these perfections, and this is why man was created free; but he made a bad use of his liberty, and by a necessary consequence, pain and temptation have increased in strength from generation to generation, in proportion as virtue has diminished. Man alone is responsible for his own misfortunes. God is innocent. This is a summary of the doctrine of the fall, already ancient in the time of Plato, and which he has explained in several of his dialogues, and remarkably so in the *Phædo*.

We must examine, then, whether this doctrine does not in itself embrace many difficulties, whether it really destroys the contradiction it proposes to solve, and whether it rests upon a demonstrated fact or remains a simple hypothesis.

With regard to the first point, we cannot disguise from ourselves that the doctrine of the fall is full of difficulties. As long as it applies only to a single individual, we can easily understand,

that by making a bad use of his free-will, he increases the strength of the evil passions within him, and renders a return to a virtuous course more and more difficult. Experience and reason place this beyond a doubt. But, in the first place, between the increasing depravity of the individual, and the transmission of the parent's weakness to the child, there exists an abyss; and should it even be proved that vice is transmitted, in order that the hypothesis may be complete, it would also become necessary that the transmission should be entire and universal. This is not what history teaches us. Some desponding reasoners hold that vice increases with each succeeding generation of man. Other philosophers maintain precisely an opposite theory: in either case we are justified in saying that the first argument carries nothing solid in its favour, and that the hypothesis of the fall is destroyed when it is found necessary for its maintenance to establish that the Jews were better than the Christians, and that the Goths and Vandals were superior to ourselves.

Let us now inquire if this hypothesis resolves the problem. God, they say, has not originally made us either unfortunate or unhappy: we have become so through the faults of our forefathers. But God, who knows everything, was not ignorant that, by abusing their liberty, the first men would change the nature of his work. God, who can do all things, could guard us, if he pleased, from the effects of the degradation of our first parents. Thus the theory of the fall leaves all the objections against Providence undisturbed.

Finally, it can only in any case deserve the title of an hypothesis; for the actual fact of the fall remains undemonstrated, and is only admitted by those who think they are obliged to have recourse to it for the sake of the argument.* It is certain that we have aspirations within ourselves which the world cannot satisfy, and faculties that, in some measure, raise us above it; which satisfactorily proves that this is not our home, and that there is reserved for us a future beyond the grave. But, because we can and ought to aspire to a more perfect state of existence, it does not follow that we have previously enjoyed that state and have fallen from it. Logical reasoning absolutely disavows such an exaggerated conclu-

* It may be almost superfluous to remind the reader that the philosophical dogma of the fall is, as M. Jules Simon explains on a future page, something quite distinct from the Christian doctrine of the fall of man. The former supposes a pre-existent state, for our misconduct in which mankind is now degraded, and undergoing a course of corrective discipline.—*Ed.*

sion. Let us also add, that by the side of these faculties, so lofty and so remote in their aim, there are many others suited to our actual condition, and exactly proportioned, if we may be permitted to use the phrase, to our human stature. We are, therefore, made to inhabit and traverse this earth; but we neither move by chance, nor undergo the punishment of a crime. The hand which has placed us here has expressly created us for the state of existence we are intended to fill, and has endowed us with the power of performing a prescribed duty, that we may live again in a future state.

It is unnecessary to observe that we are here examining the theory of the fall in a philosophical point of view, by the light of reason alone, and not by that of Divine revelation.

The dogma of original sin is, in Christianity, indissolubly linked with that of redemption. The same Divine decree has pronounced the curse and its remission. From original sin on the one hand, and from the pardon obtained through the sacrifice accomplished by our Redeemer on the other, are derived the entire worship of the Christian churches. God is an offended Master whom we are bound to fear, but he is also a Father whom we are taught to love. His decrees are immutable; but with the same breath he has pronounced the sentence of condemnation and that of redemption. He is immeasurably above us, but we gain access to him through the merits of his Son,* who is infinite and consubstantial Deity with himself. Philosophy can only contemplate this combination of tenets from without. It rests upon a basis to which all science is a stranger—upon revelation; and contains, in accordance with its privilege of revealed doctrine, affirmations beyond human comprehension. We have so little ground for confounding the dogma of original sin with the philosophical theory of the fall, that these two doctrines, in the united association of ideas to which they respectively belong, do not by any means lead to the same conclusions. The theory of the fall has been adopted to reconcile the existence of evil with the idea of Providence; and from the dogma of original sin, according to the Christian code, are derived the origin of redemption, and the conditions of punishment and pardon.

* "When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?

"But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible."—*St. Matthew*, chap. xix. verses 25, 26.

The doctrine of progression is, as we may say, exactly opposed to the theory of the fall. But as this word 'progression' does not convey to the mind a sufficiently perspicuous idea, it may be desirable to dwell briefly upon its true meaning. Nothing renders this task more easy than the association here produced by the train of ideas between the theory of the fall and that of progression. The one carries the ideal of humanity back to the past, and the other dreams of it exclusively in the future. The first belongs entirely to regret, the second to hope. If the doctrine of progression consists in believing that the labour of man is never unprofitable, even on this earth, and that each generation witnesses the increase of those resources which ameliorate material life under every form, which facilitate the development of thought, and render the manners of men more polished and gentle;—this doctrine appears as incontrovertible as it is consolatory: at least it cannot be contradicted by any philosophical reasoning derived from the principle of free will. But the theory of progression, thus understood and restricted, could avail but little in explaining the co-existence of evil with divine Providence: it has, therefore, been amplified in a singular manner. There are certain minds more enthusiastic, perhaps, than reflective, which maintain the necessity of unceasing advance in all created nature, and look upon this opinion as one of those incontestable truths which cannot be contradicted without impiety. In their eyes it would be as extreme an absurdity to deny free will as to doubt for a moment universal and continual progression.

It becomes the peculiar characteristic of all these rash opinions, adopted with ardour and professed with intolerance, that in the mouths of their advocates they resemble a provocation. Every point is the same; what they cannot prove they violently insist upon.

The doctrine of continual and universal progression assumes a double form: it is either placed in God or in the world:—

In God, when we suppose that his mind, being infinite, conceived an infinity of worlds, and that his power, being also unlimited, created, one after the other, in the hierarchical order of their perfection, all those worlds which his intelligence had imagined;—

In the world, when it is pretended that God created an imperfect work, but one which corrects and ameliorates itself by its own strength, so that without any renewed intervention of the Creator, the actual advances towards the ideal, overcoming evil at every

step, and approaching nearer and nearer to that perfection which it can never attain.

The error is equal on both sides, when these doctrines are set forward to account for the existence of evil.

For, placed in God himself, it lowers his intelligence by attributing to it a progressive series, the first terms of which were defective; and degrades his power by condemning it to pass continually through imperfect creations, to arrive at last at a better conceived and more skilfully executed work.

And, placed in the world, instead of palliating evil, it almost renders evil necessary; it supposes, gratuitously, that God was unable to create at once what he either sought or wished to produce; and it places an inequality between men from the hour of their birth, which cannot be reconciled with divine justice. Not only does it offer no remedy, under either of these two forms, but it aggravates the evil it was intended to destroy.

It seems strange that there should be no philosophers more dogmatical than those who venture to describe the nature and operations of the Almighty. While they ought only to speak with hesitation upon a matter so much beyond their depth, they lay down axioms which they transform into so many articles of faith, and thus resemble prophets rather than reasoners.

It is in this manner that they establish as a principle that infinite intelligence ought to know everything that is possible; while Aristotle, arguing with equal assurance upon the same subject, maintains that infinite intelligence can only understand infinite intelligence; because, from the moment that it descends to the finite, it deteriorates.*

The first draw from their theory this monstrous conclusion:— that it belongs to the essence of divine perfection to produce all possible things in succession; and the second, with logic no less triumphant, declares from his own axiom, that God does not act upon the world as an effective cause, and that, if in reality he is the author of good, he has become so without his own knowledge or desire; just as a flag placed upon a height serves as the rallying-point for an army. But to leave Aristotle, and to occupy ourselves solely with the opposing doctrine we have to discuss, how can any one assert, without proof, such a serious proposition as that it belongs to the essence of infinite intelligence to be actually acquainted with all possible things?

* *Aristotle's Metaphysics*, book xii. chap. 9.

The different degrees of the possible vary from evil to good; so in virtue of this hypothesis, the conception of evil is considered one of the necessary forms of perfect and divine intelligence. The proposition that follows this is even more comprehensive, and there is no one who, upon reflection, could adopt as an article of faith, that it belongs to the perfection of infinite power to produce all that infinite intelligence conceives. If infinite intelligence, of necessity, conceives evil, and the greatest possible evil, how can it be maintained that infinite power will, of the same necessity, produce the greatest possible evil? To think or to produce evil is not, according to ordinary ideas, a proof of perfection. But beyond this, true power is the power that is free; and true intelligence is the intelligence that discriminates and decides. The intelligence of God, as represented to us by these pretended axioms, has only a necessary and continued perception of a series of possibilities, without discriminating good from evil, and without predilection; and the power of God produces and realises these conceptions in a prescribed and inevitable order. Omnipotence becomes then, by the very fact, a blind power: such is the abyss into which human extravagance plunges. We, insignificant atoms as we are, assume the privilege to judge and will; and that all-powerful God, who is the creative cause of everything, is only allowed to possess, for his whole existence, intelligence, and for his entire actions, the faculty of producing an inevitable and hierarchical succession of worlds which continually ameliorate their own condition, independent of his will. Such notions are utterly untenable.

This doctrine of continued progression cannot be more solidly maintained, when considered in its consequence and not in its divine cause. It implies that God has originally created so bad a world that he himself could not possibly conceive a worse. Under this condition the theory attempts to explain evil. And what does the explanation amount to? The abolition of God! for it removes him and supplies his place by some unintelligible destiny, equally blind and cruel, alike unworthy of love or of respect. No: God has never been the author of such a work. We feel embarrassed by the imperfections of this world in presence of the consummate perfection of the Creator; and, to escape from the difficulty, we are called upon to suppose that the world has been a thousand times worse than it is! It is evident that the world in coming from the hand of its Creator was endowed with every perfection that it was capable of possessing. We do not profess to understand all the metaphysical axioms with which

false philosophy attempts to overwhelm us; but we thoroughly comprehend that God is good, omnipotent, and uncontrolled. Thus, the question remains intact, and the solution assumed from the doctrine of continual and universal progression, should be rejected as an empty chimera. Let us, however, pause here, to repeat that we deny the theory of progression in its excess and in the proposed application to the doctrine of Providence, but not in its principle, which is sound, and consistent with truth.

We discard a theory which impugns the absolute freedom of God, which degrades his intelligence, which under the pretext of exalting and explaining his infinite goodness, condemns him to produce evil, and to commence a series of creations by the worst of all possible worlds,—a theory which, without any better motive than speculative caprice, tends to establish that every thing in created nature inevitably follows the law of progression; not only man but animals, plants, and all inanimate nature. To this point the doctrine verges, for successive creation cannot be limited to one class of beings—it invades everything, plunges the imagination into a sort of chaos, and opens the door to the most monstrous absurdities; compels this ambitious philosophy, after beginning with unjustifiable and hardly intelligible axioms, to finish like a tale in "The Arabian Nights." And what do history and science reply to this? for we must not set aside facts, since the law of facts is in question. The changes do not begin from the present day, according to the system; they date from the creation of the world, and the transformations that have already taken place ought to enlighten us as to those that are to come. But no; neither history nor science say one word upon the subject, and to speak only of the human body, assuredly nothing authorises us to assert that it has been ameliorated or even modified since its first creation. We therefore reject without hesitation this overweening and empty theory which cannot be insisted upon without reaching an absurd conclusion.

But when this theory of progression is restricted to that which is free in nature, then history replies and produces a multiplicity of witnesses. It is too true that the physical world is subservient even at this day to the same laws that were created at its birth; that the extinction of some living races leaves undecided the question as to whether they have been replaced by other and superior races; and finally, that the human body has nothing to expect from the future, and has gained nothing throughout the past. But the mind of man and his moral composition have

improved; his inheritance has accumulated. We must not look for the men of antiquity in Homer, who deals only with heroes, and creates rather than describes; we can form a more just estimate of what they actually were from their laws, manners, and religion, from those of their acts, of which we preserve a true record, and from the opinions which they themselves have pronounced upon remarkable events. Thus, freed from the bias of party spirit and the factitious enthusiasm of some visionary admirers of primitive nature, we see man issue from darkness and night, and advance century after century towards a purer and more brilliant intelligence. The same man is doubtless to be found at every epoch: but first as a child, uncultivated, given up to his own instincts, and powerless against nature. By degrees the faculties within him develop themselves, each generation contributes to the improvement of that which succeeds, societies become more perfect, laws are enacted and improved, genius breaks forth in art, and unfolds itself less rapidly but with more regular and certain adornment in industrial discoveries. Science penetrates, at leisure and step by step, into the bosom of nature;* studying, sounding, and tracing mysteries to their true source; human intelligence takes possession of the world, and learns to know itself and its resources; while the most barbarous vices are rooted out, others of a refined character spring from this new civilisation, and man becomes at the same time more cunning and more gentle. At times some fatal catastrophe occurs, and the world is desolated by a tempest, after which history shows us ruins upon the soil—bewildered nations who have wandered from their path, and children unworthy of their parents. Then these years of terror disappear, great men rise up anew, and recal the past or anticipate the future; they lead the rest of mankind, restore to them their lost arts, recommence their history, re-erect their altars, inscribe new tables of the law; and thus through them another civilisation rises, which effaces the wonders of the last. If we desire to trace human life in the aggregate and through the lapse of centuries, we must disregard these exclusive cataclysms, and not devote ourselves either to one race or one people. To ascertain the results of history we must grasp the whole; as in order to take in an extensive plain we are obliged to ascend a height. The Greeks, the Romans have had their fall; but mankind never declines. A nation perishes by our side, and

* *Fichte's Destiny of Man*, translated by Barchou de Penhoen, p. 277.

another rises. A political convulsion extends itself by degrees, and checks for a time the full play and fertility of intellect. It is but a passing cloud, and we ought to disregard such shadows on the past and future. The sun shone yesterday, and will return with equal brilliancy to-morrow.

If we feel discouraged, let us enter a library. Why have we not preserved the catalogue of the Alexandrian collection. We should have there beheld the riches of the ancients, while at the same time their poverty would have lain bare before us. Undoubtedly we have not now a Homer, neither perhaps have we a Plato nor an Aristotle; but why are they so highly estimated? Because they were great in a community of little minds. Plato addressed the select few of Athens, whilst Leibnitz would have found an auditory from one end of Europe to the other, and even in the new world itself. Aristotle investigated and discovered so many of the secrets of nature that he even performed more than his part; but those who laboured after him started from the point at which he had arrived, and they still advance without our being able to tell or foresee how far they may penetrate. Are we incapable of following the progress of human intellect in theory? Let us now listen to facts; materiality speaks. Compare the Chaldean astronomers with those of the Observatory at Paris; recal to our mind the columns of Hercules; place the galleys of the ancients beside our screw steam-ships; enter the office of the electric telegraph; ascend a railway carriage; place your hand upon the first object in your cabinet—a watch, a telescope, a lamp, a book. Man was like Enceladus, crushed under three mountains—weight, time, and space. He has conquered weight by machinery, and rendered subservient to his own use the strength which impeded him; he has, in two different senses, conquered time, by history and the telegraph; and is in a fair way to annihilate space by rapidity of motion and the power of optical instruments.

Take a map of the world; observe the extent that civilisation occupies in the two hemispheres, and then retrace the course of centuries, to wonder at the rapidity with which that extent diminishes. The fifteenth century alone will deduct half the globe. The Roman empire, which was called the empire of the world, was pressed on every side by barbarism. Under Pericles civilisation was confined to one small corner of the earth.* Progression is written in this history in characters so

* *Fichte, Destiny of Man*, p. 285 *et seq.*

visible that we can hardly speak of and show it without feeling that we utter the most trite commonplaces.

God has placed progression where it was necessary and legitimate—in liberty. Metaphysics agree with history. Let us imagine a perfect being; progress and even movement are to him impossible, because he cannot change without deterioration. Let us conceive a being who cannot dispose of himself, and can neither know nor modify his own destiny: for him, relative perfection consists in remaining such as he has emanated from the hand of his Maker, without change or decay, in possession of the same functions on the last as on the first day of his existence. But now, let us suppose an imperfect being, who knows and loves perfection; will he not necessarily incline towards it; incessantly improve himself, that he may approach nearer to his model, and ameliorate the condition of all those beings around him who come within the sphere of his action. Thus, to pursue and achieve good is the law, privilege, glory and consolation of humanity.

It is, therefore, by admitting the theory of progression, and assigning to it its proper sphere of exercise, that we refuse to explain through the same cause the co-existence of the perfection of God and the imperfection of the world.

There is yet in history one more doctrine that requires consideration—the doctrine of Optimism.

Every one is acquainted with that formula of optimism which Voltaire has rendered even more popular than Leibnitz: "Every thing is for the best in this best of all possible worlds."

This formula, as we receive it, has been taken in a very absolute sense. Nothing is so useful in summing up a theory, impressing it upon the mind, and spreading it amongst men, as a formula; but taken separately, without the system of philosophy it comprises, it is rarely understood in its true sense.

All those who have not read Leibnitz, and amongst them we should be inclined to class Voltaire, willingly believe that this great metaphysician has asserted that evil is positively banished from the world; that nothing of the kind exists. Leibnitz does not deny the existence of evil, as the stoics denied that of pain, neither does he dream like Buckland of transforming evil into good by forced interpretations. His theory applies neither to individuals nor even to a species, but to combined creation and to the entire duration of the universe; and it is from this combination of beings, and from the entire continuance of their existence, that he maintains the doctrine, not of absolute but of

relative perfection. This explanation once given and received, the admirable romance of "Candide," without losing any of its originality or attraction, ceases to be an argument.

Optimism, thus reduced to its true definition, is undoubtedly a very important doctrine. We may consider it alternately by commencing from God, or from the world. If we commence from God, it is evident that we are led directly to the theory of optimism, since without it we feel ourselves obliged to admit a limit to the intelligence, power, and goodness of the Creator. In commencing from the world, we see nothing that induces us to look upon it as a false belief; for though it is true that we jostle evil—if we may be permitted to use the expression—at every step, what proves to us that this evil is not the condition upon which we receive a greater good? We cannot figure to ourselves the totality of being, therefore it is impossible to tell whether what appears to us to be a great evil may not be corrected by some general law which escapes our comprehension. Our personal experience, imperceptible as it is in this mighty whole, teaches us to judge with indulgence; and science discovers affinities and analogies where the vulgar mind perceives only confusion and disorder. There is nothing more simple and probable than this doctrine, and it cannot be denied that it deprives the objections to the existence of evil of a great portion of their force.

We do not hesitate to admit it on its principal data, and to acknowledge that the world, taken in its totality, is as perfect as it can be; but as this doctrine permits the existence of evil in detail, it does not completely destroy the difficulty; and, to arrive at something decisive, we ask how does this relative perfection of the world in its totality remedy physical pain and moral evil? If I complain to God of the pain I suffer, will it suffice that Leibnitz tells me that this world is an excellent creation, because it has come from the hands of an excellent Maker. Well, I believe this; but was there any absolute necessity which obliged this Maker to neglect details, or to render them so painful? If this necessity exists, God's omnipotence is limited by some power independent of himself; and if it does not exist, all the attempts of optimism are futile.

We are, therefore, reduced to accept optimism solely as a palliation of the difficulty; and the three great historical theories of the fall, progression, and optimism, leave us up to a certain point disarmed; it remains, therefore, to try if, by availing ourselves of the help they offer, and accepting in our necessity

incomplete results, we cannot reduce to the proportions of an ordinary difficulty, an objection which at first appeared insurmountable.

Let us first begin by examining the nature and scope of the objection.

We have admitted that there is evil, but we have shown that there is in the world more good than evil; this must not be forgotten. Even though we may fail in removing every possible doubt, it will not be the less proved that the creation of the world has been conceived and executed by a good and intelligent God. This universe is not a chaos; it is an admirable whole, in which a plan worthy of God reveals itself. It may be difficult to explain imperfections of detail, vices and misfortunes, but it would neither be rational nor philosophical to permit difficulties of detail to shake a faith solidly established. There is more than one principle which we are not permitted to doubt, although the application may baffle us.

What, then, is the question? To explain if possible the imperfections which subsist in a whole so powerfully organised. This is all; and whatever may be the result of our arguments, the triumph of good over evil remains established and complete.

The most usual and, at the same time, most simple explanation of evil is this; it may be called a mitigated form of optimism, or optimism within the limits of reason and common sense. Who can prove, it will be asked, that what we call evil is evil in fact? We often complain of imaginary evils, which, if we understood the designs of Providence, we should regard as blessings, and return thanks to him who sent them. Certain optimists, through devotion to their system, go as far as to maintain that this applies to every calamity of life, and that, either from ignorance or levity, we reproach Providence for the benefits it bestows. In speaking thus they only commit the mistake of exaggeration. It is true that evil does exist, but in a much less degree than at first sight is supposed. One of the offices of science in this world is to conquer evil, and often to employ it for good; and in proportion as science advances, the amount of evil decreases in the same degree with our ignorance. Thus, restrained within a just limit, the fundamental assertion of the optimists almost overthrows the difficulty; for we do not suffer so much from the positive evil, as from the relative amount; and this amount is unknown to us.

Thus, by an exercise of clear reason the difficulty is con-

siderably reduced. Let us however seek the source of this evil, and enquire whether it is just to attribute it to God. Amongst the misfortunes we endure and complain of, there are a great number which we bring upon ourselves.* We could perhaps avoid half the ills which destroy or embitter our own lives, and by more enlightened cares we might improve the health of our children. If we fancy our share of the good in this world insufficient, our own extravagance or idleness is often the cause. Remove the evils which spring from this origin; we shall find their number infinite. We also suffer evils derived from the errors of our fathers. In certain states, yet but little civilised, the organisation of society is such that an incalculable number of peasants are forced to labour and suffer in order to maintain an oligarchy in opulence and idleness. Is it from God or man that the serf must demand the reason of his misfortunes? When the French law assigned the paternal inheritance to the eldest son, who was guilty of the poverty of the other children? Was that a divine ordinance? A ship's crew at sea, abundantly provided for a voyage of twenty days, consume their provisions in eight, and perish at the end of fifteen. Is their destruction to be imputed to God?

God has created neither tyrants nor slaves, nobles nor plebeians: these are human inventions consequent upon vices and usurpation consecrated under the name of right; neither has God made misers, assassins, voluptuaries, nor perjurers.* He has created us free, sufficiently intelligent to resist the world and appropriate it to our wants, numerous enough to assist one another, and not too numerous to find by our own labours an assured subsistence in the produce of the earth. This is what we derive from him: the rest proceeds from ourselves; let us bless God and deplore all our weakness.

It has been objected that God in creating us free knew that we should misuse our freedom. He knew, above all, that we had the power to misuse it. But what is the gist of this argument? It goes to the full extent of claiming for man the privilege of impotence, and reproaches the Creator with having made us after his own image. If he had chained us to our appetites, like the brute creation; if we had been without strength, power of dis-

* "Corporis exigua desideria sunt: frigus submovere vult, alimentis famem ac sitim extinguere: quidquid extra concupiscitur, vitiis, non usibus laboratur." —*Seneca, De Consolatione*, chap. ix.

* "Man, seek not the author of evil, that author is thyself."—*J. J. Rousseau, Emile, Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Curate.*

crimination, or responsibility, we should then have been happy and have rendered justice to his goodness and power!

Not only do we by our vices create real evils, but also by our weakness, imaginary ones. It is not too much to say that half our tears are shed in vain.* We laugh, unconscious of our own failings, at the child who cries for a toy. Louis the XIV. who understood the government of a court, if not that of a kingdom, invented favours which cost him nothing, and conferred nothing on those who received them; they were not even symbols of merit which would have given them value, but literally barren and unmeaning favours. The greatest men under the monarchy, and St. Simon the first of all, sought eagerly to be appointed by the king to hold the chamber candlestick while his majesty disrobed. This furnishes a striking image of half our objects of ambition and half our misfortunes. It would have been a fine spectacle to have seen some Marquis de Dangeau accusing Providence and deploring the condition of mankind, because the king would not bestow upon him the honour of holding his candlestick!

Instead of weeping and lamenting over a headache, low spirits, or a fever, and groaning because an end of ribbon has been thrown to another when we coveted it, let us rather try to be men and look upon life as a serious pilgrimage. Let us leave the candlestick to courtiers and complaints to the effeminate. Let us think less of material interest, and more of our own advancement, not in the quality of functionaries or courtiers, but in our capacity as men. If we require ambition, let us seek to possess that of doing good, the only ambition worthy of our nature. Let us recollect that life is short, and followed by immortality: let us traverse the passage bravely: as soldiers who march to victory. We are not masters of our own fortune, but we are of our own hearts.† The world may condemn us to suffer, but not to suffer like cowards; it may destroy and yet not sully us.‡ It can take from us, one by one, all the joys it bestows, but it depends on ourselves to despise its pleasures, its injustice, its griefs, and to remain calm, devoted, and true to ourselves under the eye of God.

* "Quidquid optimum homini est, id extra humanam patientiam jacet, nec dari, nec eripi potest."—*Seneca, De Consolatione*, chap. viii.

† "Et mihi res, non me rebus submittere conor."—*Horace, Epist.*, book i. epist. i. verse 19.

‡ "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul."—*St. Matthew*, chap. x. verse 28.

Again we say that we do not here wish to deny evil; but in a question of comparison we have the right to reduce to their just value those complaints which cowardice and ignorance exaggerate beyond truth.

Without subterfuge we are able from the outset to treat lightly the question of degree. It is necessary, say our adversaries, that evil should exist, but not to such an extent. How then do they estimate it? What is their standard of comparison? * They measure it not by itself but by their own cowardice, and this is why they make it so great. Let us suppose that this very day and hour, God, by his sovereign will, should remove from the world half the evil that he suffers to exist there; what would the enemies of Providence say to-morrow? Precisely what they said yesterday, unless indeed their hearts were changed. Evil resembles all things that belong exclusively to this world; it has no fixed measure. It is great or small according to the strength with which it is borne. In the ward of a hospital it is not the greatest sufferer who groans the most, but the most sensitive. In a time of scarcity at sea, one bravely endures privations, while another at once despairs and succumbs. Custom, in such cases, does much. There are rich men who would be miserable if obliged to content themselves with the ordinary fare of a labourer. The misery of one contributes to the ambition and happiness of another. The same individual may change according to circumstances.

He who faints at a slight incision of the lancet, bears a sabre cut without flinching. We ought to blush more at the impatience with which we suffer pain, when we consider that this pain is almost always the just measure of our own weakness. †

Thus then we admit that there is evil, but we must not say there is too much; for this would be to confound ourselves in our own conclusions. But this evil, whatever it may be, is it reconcileable with the power and goodness of God? A small por-

* "Undecumque ex æquo ad cœlum erigitur acies, paribus intervallis omnia divina ab omnibus humanis distant."—*Seneca, De Consolatione*, chap. iv.

† "However ingenious we may be in fomenting our own miseries by means of fine institutions, we have not, up to the present time, reached that point of perfection which considers life a burden, and would induce us to prefer nonentity to existence. But for this, discouragement and despair would have possessed the majority of the world, and mankind would ere long cease to exist. Now, if it is better for us to be than not to be, this conclusion is sufficient to justify our existence."—*J. J. Rousseau, Letter to Voltaire on the Poem called Natural Religion.*

tion of evil in the presence of such a proponderance of good does not hinder the world from being essentially good in itself; but why has God suffered any evil whatever to exist there?

This is to ask why God, who has made us after his own image, has not at the same time elevated us to his own standard? What then do we desire?—to be perfect? is this what we demand? Can we in conscience content ourselves with less? God who can do everything could not do this. He could not create a perfect being, for then there would be two Gods, which would be absurd. It forms the essence of a perfect being, not to be created, but to be, and to continue to be, by its own internal sufficiency.

When we wish to demonstrate the existence of God, we rest upon the principle that a self-existent being is necessary to explain the possible existence of other beings. And when we reason upon this necessary being, the first truth that we perceive, is, that there can be no defect in this being, and that no argument whatever can prove that there is any limit to his power.

The necessity of his existence, and the perfection of his nature, are two dogmas of the same degree, established on the same foundations, correlative one to the other, ever inseparable, and without which any speculation upon the existence and nature of God is impossible. From whence it follows incontestably, that if the world were perfect it would be God, and would have no first cause: and that not being God, and possessing a first cause, it is absolutely necessary that it should be imperfect.

This being the case, it is as absurd to reproach God with the imperfections of mankind, as to maintain that a stick can have but one end, that the whole is less than a part, or that a straight line is not the shortest distance between two given points.

We have established two illustrations; one that we must not argue on the amount of evil, because this amount is unascertained, and often imaginary; the other that the existence of evil is the necessary accompaniment of a created being, not because that being is what he is, but simply because he is created. This double demonstration being admitted, the objection can exist no longer.

When we say that the existence of evil is necessary, that it is a condition absolutely inseparable from a created being, it must not be understood by this, that evil exists separately in virtue of being a special and distinct reality. God has not produced, and could not produce evil, but he has made a relative good, beneath which imagination can always conceive a still greater good; and

what is wanting in this actual good, to render it equal with that of the same kind which we imagine, is precisely what we call evil. This word expresses only a nonentity, being simply the absence or deficiency of good.

We may further state, to follow up the same idea, that everything that falls within time and space, is directly susceptible of measurement. Now, being susceptible of measurement, that is to say, in other words, being great or small, what is this, if not possessing only a certain extent of existence—an existence in a given time from now until then, restrained within a specified condition? Limit, measurement, multiplicity, and divisibility, want, or defect,—all these are only mere abstract forms of what in ordinary language, is called evil. To ask why there is evil, or rather, why there is change, multiplicity, measure, time, or space, is all the same thing, and amounts in fact to asking, why the world is the world? Doubtless this last question is a problem in itself. The existence of the world is an incontestable fact,—more difficult to comprehend and admit than the other incontestable fact, that there is a God. But let us think of God, that is to say, of a perfect Being, having the entire plenitude of being. It is impossible that he could not exist. Let us think of the world, or rather of an existence necessarily imperfect. It is quite possible that it should not exist, and even difficult that it should; for it could not come into being without a perfect cause, and we cannot imagine how a perfect cause should be induced to create, not this, but any world. This is the sole problem,—the problem of the creation. We have discussed it under its abstract form when treating of creation. We have only now to repeat, with reference to evil, what we then said with regard to imperfect or limited existence; for evil is nothing more than the limit of existence. We must not suffer ourselves to be deceived by a simple distinction of terms, and believe that there are two problems, when in fact there is only one. Why did God desire the world? Why and how has he made it? How can the existence of God and the existence of the world be reconciled? Can it be that God knows the future, and that man is free,—that the power of God is without limit, and the freedom of man entire? By what mystery does the all-powerful God, whose essence is at the same time, all goodness, allow evil to exist? Here is, in fact, a single question under three different forms.

As algebra simplifies calculations, philosophy can simplify all

arguments upon creation, foreknowledge, and evil, by bringing them back to this leading point,—the co-existence of the unit and the multiple. If we once admit the fact of creation, we have no occasion to be disturbed on the question of free-will, or the existence of evil. After this reply, there remains but one point more to consider—injustice.

We may care little for deformity—we may resign ourselves to pain, and even learn to comprehend vice: all this is apparent. Imperfection is inseparable from the created being, and from the moment when God leaves man partly to his own guidance, human liberty must exercise itself in the conditions of the struggle, between the solicitations of good and evil, between pleasure and pain, with the chance of failure; but more frequently with the prospect of success. But this abdication of God from the government of man is far from complete. The liberty he has bestowed on us is subject to a law; and that law is his will, which we can transgress, but ought to obey. It is our noblest privilege to know this will, and to submit ourselves voluntarily to it as the price of sacrifice. This law is written everywhere throughout creation.

First, in man's conscience, which means also, at the same time, in his reason and feelings; for every thing within us speaks of duty, the faculty by which we think as well as that by which we feel. We further find this law written in startling characters in all human enactments; for if some of them are unjust, hateful, or tyrannical, they are known for what they are and deceive no one, or at least, a very small number. The great majority of laws is nothing more than written reason and the formula of duty; and this is why the name of law remains holy, even when passions and violence intrude their absolutism into the code of human civilisation. History also explains duty to us: and to find it in the succession of facts, we require no comment from the historian; the simple progress of events sufficiently informs us. Finally, there is nothing in the visible world that does not everywhere reveal traces of harmonious intention, of the appropriation of all existence to one special object, and of the application of all these combined forces and influences to a single end.

Nevertheless, evil is unequally distributed; one man is happy, another miserable. Or if it be insisted upon, that none are happy, the misery of one is greater than that of the other. Let us be careful; for here is evidently injustice, and this constitutes a real difficulty. It cannot be said in this case, that the degree of evil is

nothing; for we no longer compare the amount of evil with a fictitious ideal, but one positive evil with another; and we do not reproach God with causing us to suffer, but with causing one man to suffer more than another. He may send what sufferings appear to him good; but if he is just, all ought to suffer equally.

This difficulty appears more formidable when we reflect that inequality of suffering is never justified by inequality of merit. If we could reply, this man is less unfortunate because he is better, all would be answered; but this is not the case. Here is one man born in luxury, another in poverty. One works and suffers for the other; is this just? Let us not say that fortune is nothing. These lofty maxims are only true in proportionate degrees: it is absurd and criminal to prefer riches to duty, but riches are in this world a great instrument and condition of happiness. Those who maintain that happiness or misery ought to be estimated solely by the measure of our own sensibility, assert a paradox; for they exaggerate truth until it becomes almost falsehood. To convince ourselves of this, we have only to enumerate in the different phases of a single life, which have been the happiest and which have been the most miserable periods; we shall see that happiness is in some degree dependent upon wealth. In other words, an upright man who is rich, is happier than an upright man who is poor. This being the case, why does God suffer a just man to be born in poverty?

Finally, injustice appears still more apparent, if we consider, not a just and an unjust man, but a good man and a criminal. Let us suppose the good man, overwhelmed with privation and misery, betrayed in his affections, imprisoned, driven from his country, disgraced by an unjust sentence, and crushed under the weight of calumny. The other triumphant, surrounded with luxury, enjoying the pleasures of intelligence, and perhaps the gratification of being loved and admired; held up as a model to youth; speaking of virtue, in all probability, without shame; living in apparent respectability on the fruits of crime—for virtue is easy to him who wants nothing;—and even spoken well of after his death, through the fascinating influence of success.

Let us think of this, and for this alone let us appeal to the justice of God.

Three answers are ready. Certain liberal-minded Utopians

persuade themselves that all this evil comes from man himself, and from the manner in which society is organised. According to them, we have only to change the foundation of social order, to restore each person to his proper position, and to establish the reign of universal justice. God forbid that we should discourage such expectations. We believe that abuses are numerous, and that for many, a remedy may be found; and we only ask that ambition may not take the mask of patriotism, that ignorance may not presume to detract from merit, that the desire of curbing evil may not change into the mania of transforming every thing, that objectionable means may not be used even to accomplish a good end, and that defective order may never be replaced by absolute confusion. Above all we ask that we may not feed on vain hopes, and that in the midst of all reforms, we may never forget the nature of that social being for whom they are made.

Such is the construction of man that imperfection and consequently injustice will invariably accompany him. Every effort of the legislator ought to tend to render injustice less frequent, or less complete. Let us then quit these vain aspirations, which deal too harshly with society, and too leniently with man; and seek not to reply to this objection to the existence of injustice by attempting to set up a new code. There is still a point which resists the arguments of all Utopians. According to their regulations, we should all be born equally rich: let it be so; riches are after all a purely human conventionality. But shall we also be born equally intelligent? It is useless to say that all functions may be made equally honourable and attractive; these are empty dreams. By the side of intellectual inequality is there not also moral inequality? This fact is startling, and can neither be denied nor remedied. Education can do much, but we must neither mistake its power nor exaggerate it to the point of saying that it can re-establish intellectual equality amongst men.

A more conclusive reply to the objection drawn from injustice is this, that God has assigned to man an influential position in the government of society. Providence rules the world from above, but the part allotted to us, injustice, has still the trace or mark of Providence. This is not, under a new form, the reply we have just rejected. On the contrary, whatever may be the construction of society, if it is human, we maintain that it cannot be absolutely just. Thus the existence of injustice is explained by the interference of man in the government of human nature;

as the existence of vice in every individual, is accounted for by the conditions and requirements of liberty.

This reply has both truth and plausibility; it extenuates without destroying evil. If the law of justice is absolute, and it is so, virtue constitutes an imprescriptible right, and God is, if we may dare to use such an expression, the just man's debtor. The just may wait—the hour of God must surely come.

Thus the difficulty is invincible, or rather it would be so if there were no immortality. Philosophy triumphs over every thing but this alone. Physical evil is nothing—pain is contemptible; injustice alone when persisted in, is an invincible objection to the goodness of God. If we seek to explain or palliate this, we find nothing but evasion. For injustice is an absolute evil, one of the greatest—in fact the sole evil.* Whoever permits or sanctions injustice is either impotent or wicked. The most consummate and irreparable injustice would be the non-existence of God.

We do not here speak of the virtuous man; we do not say that recompense is necessary for him. Virtue may dispense with reward, but God cannot dispense with rewarding virtue. We may die for justice without a murmur, but in the presence of this death we should accuse Providence if the tragedy were a final consummation, and not, on the contrary, a transition and a trial.†

This is the delicious fruit that suffering bears, and it is from this we may say that it overflows with immortality. Let us bless God for rendering the law of duty so evident, and often so austere, that each day presents us with either the opportunity or the realisation of a martyrdom. This subversion of truth and justice manifests to us that life is only a commencement and a trial—the hour before eternity.

What can other demonstrations signify? this includes all. Not only do I console myself for the injustice I behold, but I find a pleasure in that which I experience. I am just and I am persecuted, but God is waiting to receive me.‡

* "Whatever is evil in itself will always remain evil. I speak in the moral, not in the physical sense, for in the latter there is nothing absolutely bad; all is good."—*J. J. Rousseau, Letter to M. D'Alembert, etc.*, Ed. Lahure, vol. i. p. 251.

† "Bonum virum (Deus) in deliciis non habet; experitur, indurat, sibi illum præparat."—*Seneca, De Providentiâ*, chap. i.

‡ "He that taketh not his cross and followeth after me is not worthy of me."—*St. Matthew*, chap. x. verse 38.

"It appears from the murmurs of impatient mortals that God ought to reward them before they deserve recompense and that he is called upon to pay their virtue in advance. Alas! let us first be virtuous and then we shall be happy. Let us not exact the prize before we have won the victory, nor demand our wages until the work is complete." *

* *J. J. Rousseau, Emile, Profession of Faith of a Savoyard Curate.*

CHAPTER III.

EXAMINATION OF THE OBJECTIONS DRAWN FROM DIVINE IMMUTABILITY.

"I believe that God is immutable. It appears evident that his is a perfection which cannot be subject to change. This is sufficient for me. Even when I cannot reconcile the immutability of God with his liberty, I believe he possesses these attributes, since his perfection is infinite."—*Malebranche, Eighth Discourse upon Metaphysics*, sect. 2.

Up to this point we have considered Providence in its most accessible, and in some degree, most familiar point of view. We have sought in the world the traces of divine wisdom and goodness, and the objection we have discussed is that which first presents itself, and which strikes even the minds of the least attentive observers—the existence of evil.

We have no occasion to examine the world to learn that God directs it. We know that God exists, and however little we may be able to comprehend his nature, we know that he is perfect and therefore good, intelligent, and powerful.

Now it is impossible that a being essentially good could love disorder, or that a being essentially intelligent should produce a work without arranging it according to a fixed plan; or finally, that an all-powerful being should not realise the plan which his intelligence has conceived.

Thus the data with which we are already supplied, as the nature of God, are sufficient to show us that there is order in the world. And let it not be said that we make use of this order to establish the existence of God, for we require nothing more to enable us to believe in a perfect deity than that which we feel in our own thoughts and hearts. We accept only as addenda the arguments which the world supplies.

But whether we directly establish the existence of Providence by following out the idea of divine perfection, or that we adopt the longer and less accessible path of contemplating the wonders of nature, is there not something of contradiction between the

idea of Providence and the absolute immutability that we are compelled to attribute to God?

The power of human thought is so feeble when applied to these matters, that it even contradicts itself in the development of its ideas of perfection. For sometimes it only desires to see in perfection immutable unity, and at others it endeavours to discover all the attributes of Providence, goodness, foresight, solicitude, and unceasing action. Hence result, in some degree, two opposite philosophical doctrines which we must strive to reconcile, as each appears true and necessary to the other. Let us first examine the nature of the difficulty closely, before we attempt its solution.

It is incontestable that when we think of God, beginning from the idea of absolute perfection which our reason suggests to us, and when we elevate ourselves towards him by the aid of our conception of originating cause, making the world our starting-point, we arrive at speculations of a totally different nature, and which have each their peculiar disadvantages.

The first method leads us to an immutable God in whom there is neither imperfection nor limit; and the second to a more human and accessible Deity, whose majesty attracts our love without implanting fear in our minds, and whose paternal hand we, in some measure, feel above us. There is equal difficulty in both systems: in one, because we descend to creation; in the other, because we mount up to the Creator.

The immutable God of the metaphysician can only think of, or love himself, and his entire action terminates in himself. If he bestows any thought on the world, if he loves, creates, and governs it, time, space, and consequently imperfection, enter into his being; he degenerates from his absolute unity.

To render an action great, it is not sufficient that it should be produced by a mighty power; its effect must also be great; so that the littleness of the world lowers and reduces God.

On the contrary, the creative Deity of the philosophy of common sense, loves the world, occupies himself with it, governs it, and replies to our prayers with added benefits. He can therefore be moved, and we in our utter insignificance act in some degree upon this infinite greatness.

Thus this immutability is not entire; his eternity which the world can penetrate is not indivisible, he is not all-sufficient in himself, since he requires a witness and a proof of his glory.

How can such antagonism be reconciled? Must we renounce

the idea of perfection which inevitably comprehends immutability, or give up the notion of Providence which appears to render this immutability impossible?

We here again find by another road the eternal and perhaps only problem of philosophy, the accordance of the unit and the multiple. This is, at bottom, the problem of creation; but we here, in a certain degree, see it more clearly manifested, since at first sight it appears that the constant and persevering government of the world implies more motion and variety than the single act of creation. We look upon this problem as one that cannot be solved.

The efforts of philosophy ought to tend to such an establishment of conditions as may render equivocation impossible, and to show distinctly how far science can carry the human mind, and where incomprehensibility begins. Far from injuring reason by depriving it of that which surpasses its scope, we increase its authority in all matters which fall legitimately within its jurisdiction. In all things ignorance itself is preferable to false knowledge.*

History presents us several attempts at reconciliation between the unity of God and his providence. We shall not return to the already refuted doctrine of the pantheists. Aristotle proposed an ingenious system which served as a type for all schools, the theory of which rests upon the hypothesis of an indifferent God. According to him, God is, and remains immutable: nothing can affect his unchanging nature; no wish, no thought. He thinks only of himself: he neither loves, wills, nor desires any thing external to his own essence. Here is indeed the imaginary God of metaphysics. This God, who disdains to know the world, and consequently to govern the world, is nevertheless the cause of all the order that we behold around us. This is to say that the world is an eternal existence, or to use the words of Aristotle, "an animal whose nature it is to love the good and beautiful and to tend towards them; so that God governs it as a guiding star without departing from his immutability."† The first difficulty in this

* "I am wiser than that man: for it may be that neither he nor I possess any wonderful degree of knowledge; but there is this difference between us, he believes that he has knowledge, although he knows nothing, and I, although I may know nothing, do not believe that I have knowledge."—*Plato's Apology for Socrates*, translated by V. Cousin, vol. i. p. 73.

† "It is thus that this immutable mover acts; the desirable and the intelligible move without being moved. The first great cause influences what he wills."—*Metaphysics*, book xii. chap. vii.

system is that it supposes the eternity of matter and of organised matter; the second, that this immutable and indifferent God, whom they wish to render the only object of love, has no longer any thing in his nature by which love can be excited.

The Alexandrians have adopted a much more profound solution in their theory of the Hypostasis. They suppose a single God under three personifications, of which the first is the immutable unity of metaphysics; the third, the father of the world; and the second, the link that connects them. This hypothesis would explain every thing, if it could itself be explained, and above all if it were capable of proof. We understand perfectly that it belongs to the pantheistic doctrine of the Alexandrian school; by whose disciples it can alone be admitted.

We have seen that the principal objection of the pantheists to the dogma of creation is, that God being an absolute unit, he cannot therefore produce the world, which is a multiple; and that after having explained this objection, and insisted upon the perfection of the divine unit, which cannot produce the world without deterioration, when they propose their solution, they have nothing to offer but the identity of this unit with the multiple. Immediately, and with augmented force, we turn upon them their own arguments against creation; for if it is difficult for the unit to engender the multiple, it is simply impossible that the unit and the multiple can be one. Now the theory of hypostasis establishes in God the same identity of the one and the multiple, which forms the foundation of the doctrine of pantheism. It may then be admitted by pantheists, as it accords with their principles, but it must be rejected by the partisans of creation. In fact, when having rejected pantheism as absurd and contradictory, and admitted the theory of creation, however incomprehensible, the latter find themselves in the presence of a God, immutable by reason, and Creator by evidence,—if to reconcile this immobility and action they suppose in God the co-existence of action and immobility, is it not evident that they are as defective logicians as the pantheists, and that they have merely, like them, changed the locality of the difficulty, without solving it?

What proves still more the falseness of this solution, and shows that it rests only on a vague and ill-defined idea, is, that those who adopt it cannot express what they mean. They say that there is in God a certain duality; but a duality of what? Here their embarrassment becomes manifest. Is it a duality of beings? then there are two Gods;—or of nature? this nearly

amounts to the same thing, and is only replacing one word by another: but even if it were admitted as a clear and intelligible proposition that there can be two natures in one being, nobody has yet dared to assert that there are two natures in God. What then is to be done? To explain an idea which is not an idea, they have coined a word, and said, that in God there are several *hypostases*, or personalities. This amounts to mere puerility; and the Alexandrians, who invented this word and doctrine, being once in possession of such an easy method of escaping from all difficulties, have so multiplied their hypostases, that their imaginations have become lost in confused enumeration.

A third and not less solid objection against the theory of hypostases, is this. Since immobility, the characteristic of perfection, can only belong to the first hypostasis, the first person of God is alone perfect; and it must be concluded, that it alone is God, which is against the proposition, or that God is imperfect. And since creation is attributed to the third hypostasis, and to it alone, there is no longer between the three hypostases any thing more than an affinity of co-existence; and they are strangers to each other, although in the same substance;—which is absurd.

What we say of the Alexandrians, and of all those who wish to introduce into the nature of God a certain plurality, cannot apply to the Christian doctrine. Christianity admits one God in three persons, and the Alexandrians a single God in three hypostases: herein lies the resemblance. There is not even a difference of terms; since *person* is the translation of the Latin word *persona*, which is equivalent to the Greek *hypostasis* (*ὑπόστασις*); and this last word is used by the Fathers of the Greek Church equally with that of *πρόσωπον*. Under this great and important analogy, mighty differences are concealed; for the order, character, and relative value of the hypostases, and even their number (for with some disciples of the school each hypostasis becomes a trinity in its turn), are looked upon by the Alexandrians in quite a different point of view from the Christians.* But the first of all the distinctions, the fundamental and the only one with which we have to deal, is, that the dogma of Christianity is a mystery. This single word at once places it beyond all our objections.

In fact, what do we say against the Alexandrians? That their

* The comparison between the Christian and the Alexandrian Trinity may be seen at large in *Jules Simon's History of the Alexandrian School*, book ii. chap. iv. vol. i.

doctrine is incomprehensible? this would amount to nothing; we declare that it is not, and cannot be, demonstrated. And this is also the Christian argument. They affirm that the doctrine is beyond demonstration, being qualified with mystery; nevertheless, they admit it because they obey a principle superior to reason. Those who wish to oppose Christianity, must prove that there is no principle superior to reason; and that revelation, upon which their religion entirely rests, has never taken place. This is the point of difficulty between Christians and unbelievers; for if there has been no revelation, religion falls to the ground; and if there has been revelation, if there is any authority superior to reason, this authority once recognised, we must bow before it, without permitting reason to raise a voice in opposition.

Thus in a revealed religion, mystery must necessarily exist; or, rather, dogmas which do not appeal to reason, and which reason can neither understand nor prove. As to philosophers whose reason is their sole guide, they can believe nothing but what is rationally demonstrable.

Let us not exaggerate this last proposition so far as to say, that every thing can be demonstrated and understood. There are things which hitherto have never been explained, and which probably never will; and even amongst those that are demonstrated, there are some that are incomprehensible. Thus we believe that God is incomprehensible, and that creation is incomprehensible; yet this does not prevent our admitting the existence of a creative God. But the dogma of the Trinity is not only incomprehensible, but it constitutes what we call a mystery.* Under this title it may be admitted into a religion, but it can hold no place in philosophy.

These two words, mystery and incomprehensibility, are often used synonymously. It is clear that all mystery is incomprehensible, but every thing that is incomprehensible is not of necessity a mystery. To admit an incomprehensibility, is to acknowledge that reason has limits: to admit a mystery, is to have recourse to some other authority than reason. When we maintain that God is incomprehensible, we express nothing more than an acknowledgment of our own insignificance. But when it is said that he is one in three hypostases, a gratuitous opinion is expressed upon the nature of an incomprehensible being; an

* "Dictum est tamen tres personæ, non ut aliquid diceretur, sed ne taceatur."—*St. Augustin, De Trinitate*, book v. chap. x.

hypothesis is constructed which rests neither on reason nor experience. There can be no possible confusion between two assertions of such opposite natures. Thus, for example, the Catholic religion maintains that God is incomprehensible, and this is so little mysterious, that all schools of theology give reasons for this incomprehensibility; and then add, that this incomprehensible God is one and yet three; one in his substance, triple in his persons; and in this case they urge no other authority than that of revelation, because the tenet being a mystery, cannot be founded on reason, but depends entirely on faith.

Let us dwell upon this distinction, which never can be too much impressed. The confusion that has been produced between these two orders of things, troubles the mind of the philosopher, and sets religion and science in opposition. If I show by irrefragable arguments that this world has a cause exterior to itself, am I not compelled to believe in the existence of this cause? and will this obligation cease if it is then demonstrated to me that I can never know the nature of this cause? Certainly not. I may therefore believe in a thing that I cannot understand. It is common to say, "I believe only what I comprehend;" this an erroneous expression: we ought rather to say, "I only believe that which is demonstrated." Thus there is little difficulty in what relates to the incomprehensible. If an argument is incomprehensible, it amounts to nothing, it proves nothing; but if it is clear, and of a kind to gain the concurrence of all sensible minds, it must not be rejected under the pretext that its aim is to show the existence of a certain thing of which we can never know any thing, save that it exists. To demonstrate the existence of a being, and to comprehend the nature of this being, are two very different operations; and the result of the one does not in the least depend upon that of the other. We believe with all the rationalists in the sovereignty of reason, but we can never feel that this sovereignty is unlimited. There exists not in man the faculty which can control reason, but there are realities in nature which reason cannot reach.

Let us now consider the question of mysteries. When reason has reached its limit, it declares that all beyond is incomprehensible. This declaration can only offend those ambitious spirits who believe it possible for finite intelligence to fathom the infinite, and to make itself master of illimitable knowledge. But if instead of stopping at this humble, but assuredly wise admission of the impotence of human reason, they seek to pass beyond

to the description and explanation of a nature whose incomprehensibility has previously been recognised; if in this explanation of the incomprehensible, they set forth propositions which are not proved, and impose them on the strength of supernatural authority;—this new doctrine is what properly constitutes mystery. It is not only incomprehensible: beyond this characteristic there are two others: it is affirmed, without being demonstrated, and is proposed in the name of a supernatural authority. It follows, therefore, that mysteries cannot be admitted, except by meritorious faith. Philosophical belief is restricted and governed by evidence; there can, therefore, be no merit in believing a philosophical doctrine; but when to obey a religious precept, we compel ourselves to admit, by an effort of will, a dogma which reason repudiates, there is true merit in this sacrifice, as respects the religion by which it is imposed.

To return, after this digression, to the Alexandrian solution, we must, in justice, say that it is not objectionable to the extent of the doctrine of Aristotle, and that of the pantheists. If even nothing could be urged against it, except that it cannot be proved, we might accept it, regardless of science, as a very ingenious hypothesis. When Plato discovered beyond the boundaries of what was properly called science, a theory which pleased his speculative mind, without being based on sufficient proofs, he hesitated not to examine it, though he foresaw that he would then raise himself to a region where philosophy could no longer guide him. With this reservation, there ceases to be danger in these adventurous speculations; and as a flash of lightning for an instant pierces the cloud, and leaves us again in darkness, so they may serve to excite and admonish the meditations of the philosopher. Unfortunately, the theory of hypostases, in affirming the coexistence in God of immobility and motion, implies a contradiction in terms, and is therefore inadmissible, even under the title of an hypothesis.

Such a solution, often revived by various schools of rationalists until the seventeenth century, cannot be of any assistance to us, and history leaves this problem in our hands without proof: How has God been able to create the world, without ceasing to be immutable?

Let us frankly acknowledge that this barrenness of history this impotence of philosophy, do not surprise us. There are two distinct problems contained in the complex question of creation. The one which first presents itself is—How is it possible that out

of nothing God could create something? And the other is—Who and what is this being that occupies our thoughts? Can it be that He who is all sufficient for Himself, who can desire nothing, who cannot without deterioration think of any other object than Himself, and who is necessarily immovable, since any movement whatever implies change—and there cannot be two modes of being perfect—how can such a being have thought of the world? have desired or wished to produce it? One of these two problems turns on the will to create, and the other on the efficacy of that will. Our reply is the same to both—it is equally impossible to explain or to deny creation.

To reply thus is to confess that we cannot reply, and to declare that we submit to this impossibility. We lose nothing by admitting that philosophy has its limits, and that God who has given human intelligence such a vast field to explore that it can never be exhausted, has reserved exclusively to himself all that relates to his own infinite perfection.*

Leibnitz gave utterance to a sentence which philosophers should never forget, when he said "*Cave a consequentiariis*,"—beware of too much logic. It belongs to the condition of humanity to be restrained within a certain medium, and we should not seek to pierce beyond our own natural horizon. We there see clearly within our prescribed limits, and we do nothing but err when we venture to exceed them. The most rigorous logic then leads us to conclusions which turn against our avowed principles, and resemble mockery. Amongst the most gifted minds some run wild, while others renounce the means in abhorrence of the end. There is true wisdom in understanding that our faculties are suited to our destiny, in following them as far as they can go, and in not requiring them to conduct us beyond the boundary. Philosopher, remember that thou art but a man! In geometry, which is universally admitted to be a perfect science, the idea of the infinite causes troubles as soon as it is suggested. Whether we regard infinitely great or infinitely little infinitude, all arguments into which this notion introduces itself, are at the same time false and irrefutable. We find the same obstacle at either extremity of our researches, whether we desire to comprehend eternity or a moment, unlimited space or the monad. On the contrary, as long as we only confine ourselves to what lies between,

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to the description and explanation of a nature whose incomprehensibility has previously been recognised; if in this explanation of the incomprehensible, they set forth propositions which are not proved, and impose them on the strength of supernatural authority;—this new doctrine is what properly constitutes mystery. It is not only incomprehensible: beyond this characteristic there are two others: it is affirmed, without being demonstrated, and is proposed in the name of a supernatural authority. It follows, therefore, that mysteries cannot be admitted, except by meritorious faith. Philosophical belief is restricted and governed by evidence; there can, therefore, be no merit in believing a philosophical doctrine; but when to obey a religious precept, we compel ourselves to admit, by an effort of will, a dogma which reason repudiates, there is true merit in this sacrifice, as respects the religion by which it is imposed.

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of nothing God could create something? And the other is—Who and what is this being that occupies our thoughts? Can it be that He who is all sufficient for Himself, who can desire nothing, who cannot without deterioration think of any other object than Himself, and who is necessarily immovable, since any movement whatever implies change—and there cannot be two modes of being perfect—how can such a being have thought of the world? have desired or wished to produce it? One of these two problems turns on the will to create, and the other on the efficacy of that will. Our reply is the same to both—it is equally impossible to explain or to deny creation.

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Docere, non vult, erudita inscitia est."
Verse by Joseph Scaliger.

that is to say, comparison and measurement, the human mind is at home; it feels at ease, and decides with confidence. This is what we are created for. If philosophy would always confine itself within these limits, it would have fewer enemies and superior influence. It would no longer hold intermediate disputes with common sense. In all that relates to the idea of God, philosophy has most certainly cut off a great portion of its own power, in trying to solve and understand every thing. We forget the force of what it has actually proved, and think only of the temerity or extravagance of its assertions. When the Eleatics declare that God alone exists; or when Aristotle affirms that God could not interfere in the construction or government of the world without degenerating from the nature of his infinite perfection; or when the pantheists attempt to cut the difficulty in two by doubling it, and in despair confound the finite and the infinite into one single substance,—the good sense of human nature protests against them all, because the world is below us, visible to our minds and consciences, and God above rules in our souls and hearts.

On the face of this absurd, and at the same time melancholy conclusion, in which we find no convincing arguments, but on the contrary, a thousand that might be refuted, philosophy is rejected, through the mistakes of its own schools. If, on the contrary, assigning to human intelligence its proper position and portion, science would content itself with demonstrating the existence of God, with showing that he is good and all-powerful, that he has created, and governs the universe; and with acknowledging, in the first place, that it is not in the power of man to comprehend the Divine nature, and its action on the world; it would then carry conviction to every mind: for no one can refuse to know God and to love him; and none, except a few daring philosophers, can ever hope to fathom his omnipotence.

It remains for us to enquire whether we ourselves, notwithstanding our reservations, do not fall into the same inconsistency, since we acknowledge that God is certainly immutable, in virtue of his perfection, and that he is undoubtedly the Creator of all things.

There is a most essential difference between the Alexandrian doctrine and that which we profess; and this difference is entirely in our favour.

The Alexandrians try to explain the difficulty, and explain it badly.

We do not attempt explanation, and only require that others should admit with us that there may exist in the theory inexplicable difficulties.

Besides this, we also affirm that God, although himself immoveable, produces motion: while the Alexandrians maintain that immobility and motion are both in the essence of God.

What is only a difficulty in our system, becomes in theirs a contradiction and an impossibility.

To say that we do not know how immobility produces motion, or to say that the same being is at once moveable and immoveable, are two assertions which cannot possibly be confounded. The analogy is only on the surface, and disappears before a less superficial examination.

If it were not always dangerous to draw conclusions when infinity is one of the terms compared, we might say that man in his foundation or basis is a cause entirely one and identical, and that, nevertheless, this single cause has produced multiplied and different effects; and that we can neither deny nor understand this; so that it is not necessary to ascend up to God to find the difficulty of reconciling the unit and the multiple, and to acknowledge that it cannot be resolved. But we only employ this argument to demonstrate the limits of human understanding, and not to establish any analogy between the Divine, omnipotent cause, and the more limited and inferior cause, which man may be admitted to be.

Any assimilation and comparison of this kind is so far from our thoughts, that our chief care is to establish that, even without analogy to ourselves and the world, the first great cause is necessarily inaccessible to human reason. Neither let us incur the reproach addressed by the materialists to all philosophy which limits the world and its laws to the existence of God. "God," say they, "is only an hypothesis which dispenses with argument."

No: God is not an hypothesis, for there exists nothing more forcibly or completely demonstrated than his actual existence: and to give utterance to this smart sentence, which is, in fact, blasphemy, they have no occasion to turn to the pages of Descartes, Leibnitz, or any of the teachers of philosophy; or even to Spinoza himself.

If God were an hypothesis, the entire world would also be an hypothesis; for we cannot understand the existence of the world without ascribing it to God: and so far from the intervention of God in science being a stumbling-block in the way of reason, God is a component part of all reason, and we cannot exercise this

faculty without him, unless we suppose that reason can exist without a creative principle.

God does not forbid us to use our reasoning powers, but he forbids us to teach, with the atheists, that the world is necessary, and with the pantheists, that the world is God.

Finally, we must not lose sight of the difference that exists between the various orders of induction which comprise the little we know of the nature of God. A short summary is here indispensable:—

All the proofs of the existence of God may be collected together under two categories; the first derived from the idea of the absolute, the second from the necessity of a creative cause.

Proceeding on these lines of demonstration, we know two things of God:—one, that he is perfect; the other, that he is our creator.

We know this, in the most positive manner, not by resting upon two or three syllogisms, but upon all psychology, logic, moral doctrine and philosophy. These two truths are both so firmly established that there is nothing, either in science or in common sense, more universally accepted or more incontestable.

It is impossible that God can exist without absolute perfection; and his existence is useless if he is not a creator.

Once in possession of these truths, the certainty of which is evident and complete, science and humanity may deduce from them everything which is essentially requisite for the government and consolation of life.

If the world and man proceed from a cause, and that cause is perfect, there is nothing which does not depend on the will of that cause, and, consequently, nothing which has not an assigned law and destiny.

Man finds within himself the clear, precise, and infallible principle necessary to his own government. He develops, explains, and comments on it, in rendering an account to himself of his faculties, his aptitude, his relative position in the world, the place that his endowments assign to him in the midst of all other creatures, and the changes which he must undergo to arrive at the full possession of his being. He feels that this law could only have been placed within him by the hand of the creator. His conviction renders the law still more holy and acceptable; it gives to virtue the character of love, and takes away from sacrifice its greatest bitterness. Guided by this thought, and warmed by this sentiment, man is armed against all the troubles of mind or

heart. He knows whence he comes and whither he goes: he is acquainted with the road, and feels himself upheld by the hand of a father. Nothing is wanting to gratify and assuage these two noble and imperious demands of his nature—adoration and hope.

This entire assemblage of facts and opinions is solid, and appears sufficient. A great majority of mankind is satisfied with them, but certain minds feel themselves compelled to seek beyond, and from that moment they either enter into less accessible regions, or the light of reason becomes a less certain guide.

This passage from an easy and, in some degree, an infallible science, to one which is at once more profound and less confident in itself, ought to be scrupulously distinguished by all who love truth, as it requires to be loved, with fervour, and at the same time with diffidence.

When we know that God exists, that he is perfect, that he has created the world; and when we feel that he loves and watches over us, what then induces us to seek beyond this? A powerful instinct of our nature, which is perhaps the first implement of science,—curiosity.

As soon as we are convinced that any given thing exists, we wish to know how it can exist. To know first, to comprehend afterwards: such is the law which controls the human mind. Hence proceeds this succession of ideas:—

God is, and he is perfect: what is perfection? He has created the world: what is it to create?

Now, there is an infinite difference between these two problems: —to know that a thing exists, and to comprehend how it exists.

To know that a thing exists is to be in possession of the fact; to comprehend how it exists is to penetrate the very secret of existence itself.

We can no more confound these two degrees of knowledge than we can compare the science of him who reads the hours on the dial with that of the mechanician who understands, explains, and produces the movement of a watch.

Let us at once remark, to excuse, in some degree, human curiosity in what relates to the knowledge of God, that it is very difficult to restrict ourselves to a clear and defined understanding of the words perfection, creation, and future happiness. Unexplained perfection is very abstruse; it is not, if we may use the expression, visible. The God who has given us to feel and know that he is perfect, without permitting us to obtain a glimpse of his perfection, remains too far above our reach.

He astonishes without drawing us towards him; he overwhelms our faculties.

By a necessary consequence, we cannot clearly conceive the nature of that happiness which he has promised us, and which must evidently depend upon what he himself is. Thus our knowledge is very limited, and the unknown presses closely on us on every side: an unknown God above our heads, an undescribed happiness beyond the tomb; we are too little to content ourselves with these few words. This frigid science does not sufficiently protect us. It is thus that human curiosity may find its apology.

Meanwhile, as we ought to learn wisdom, and put in practice the famous precept of Socrates, "know thyself," on the very threshold of this new world, it is right to remember that in every thing, even when we are perfectly acquainted with a fact, we only imperfectly understand the secret of its nature; that, besides, there are very many important and familiar facts of which the secret completely escapes us, and we delude ourselves as to our actual ignorance, by taking comparisons for explanations, like the valet in the comedy, who ceases to entertain any fear of unlucky meetings, because he sees a house that he knows; that, if we are in this darkness, and feel our incapacity to comprehend the world and ourselves, with how much greater reason ought we to despair of understanding that which is perfect and infinite; that, between the finite and the infinite there is no degree of comparison, and that the infinite is immeasurable; that it cannot be compared, that it escapes from our minds, not only because it governs them, but because the laws of our intelligence, consisting only of proportion, comparison, analogy: and measurement, cannot be applied to that which has no analogy: whence it follows that the nature of perfection, of the act of creation, and of promised felicity in another life, are utterly beyond the range of human intellect.

What are we then to do? Must we remain in our ignorance, or plunge into rash speculations?

The danger appears to be equal on either side, whether we condemn ourselves to a degree of barrenness, which may discourage love and even faith, or whether we run the risk of rushing into false abstractions, and become lost in our own bewildered ideas.

It is to be remarked that every school takes this second part. The difference only consists in the process. The most essentially metaphysical schools continue to develop the idea of infinite

perfection, and the more essentially human schools endeavour to fathom the notion of Providence. The first tending to lose themselves in an abstract conception: the others debasing themselves more and more towards anthropomorphism.

When metaphysicians venture, as the Eleatics, and even Plato at certain moments did, to deny all duality to God,—when they assert that he possesses neither movement, power, action, nor thought,—common sense protests with reason against this conclusion, and declares that this God evades us entirely, that he becomes useless to man, and to the entire world.

And when naturalists exhibit God as creating the world by weight and measurement, governing it with solicitude, changing his intentions to conform to our wishes, irritated by our faults, appeased by our homage, and afflicted at our miseries, science reasonably reproaches them with having lost sight of the ideal, and of assimilating the nature of God so nearly to that of man, that even the idea of perfection disappears. The serious mistakes into which these two schools have fallen, plainly show the danger of following in theodicy any exclusive method of relying upon experience and despising metaphysics, or of trusting to mere speculation, to the total abandonment of experience. Why refuse to draw from the principles of reason what they really can supply? And why not listen to the voice of nature which in all its various wonders cries aloud to us "There is a Providence?" Is it not right, on the contrary, to employ in the solution of so great a problem all the strength of our intelligence, and all the resources of our observation? It is true that, carried too far, these two methods lead to results difficult of reconciliation; but either of them, taken separately, arrives at conclusions which reason disavows, for experience only gives us an imperfect God, and metaphysics a useless one. Instead of rushing into extremes which almost amount to blasphemy, is it not much better to admit that immutability and action may coexist in God, although we cannot comprehend how he can create motion without participating in it? Have we not already, when discussing the subject of creation, felt the necessity of admitting that the unit may produce the multiple without ceasing to be a unit? If there exist in nature inexplicable mysteries, why should they not exist in God, who is the author of nature? And, if everything demonstrates that the nature of God is really incomprehensible, why should we recoil whenever a new difficulty presents itself? It is scarcely correct to use the term "a new difficulty," for it is

always a repetition of the same that crosses our path under another form. Is it to demand too much from human pride to propose that it should recognise divine incomprehensibility, because this incomprehensibility saves it from ever-recurring contradictions?

Let us conclude here, as we have decided on the subject of creation and the divine faculties, that the attributes of God and Providence are equally demonstrated and incontestable; that immutability and providence coexist in God without our being able to account for the association; and let us acknowledge that if science is sound and confident in itself when it demonstrates facts, it enters upon the domain of supposition as soon as it attempts to explain them.

CHAPTER IV.

GOD GOVERNS THE WORLD BY GENERAL LAWS.

"Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him."—*St. Matthew*, chap. vi. verse 8.

"God does not act as man, as individual causes, or as limited intelligences. The reason of his choice is derived from the wisdom of his laws, and the wisdom of his laws from their affinity with his attributes, from their simplicity, their fruitfulness, and, in a word, from their divinity."—*Malebranche, Ninth Conversation on Metaphysics*, sect. 2.

We are to now to examine whether Providence governs all things by general laws without regarding details, or whether God superintends every event, and interposes directly in human affairs.

According to the doctrine of the immediate and constant intervention of Providence, Providence presides over everything. It governs the moral as well as the physical world; knows every sentiment of our hearts, and all the resolutions of our wills; not only does it know but it produces them, or at least contributes to produce them. It rules external circumstances with the full power of accommodating them to our wants, and of dispensing reward or punishment.

This doctrine presents one objection; it is difficult to reconcile it with the existence of liberty. In fact, if God knows our resolutions beforehand, why should we deliberate? if he causes our actions, why do we desire them? It also includes a corresponding advantage, that of rendering worship possible; for to enable us to pray to God, it becomes necessary that he should listen and receive our petitions favourably.

This is the mode of reasoning adopted to establish that God occupies himself with details.

Is it possible that a thing has existed, does exist, or could exist, without the knowledge of God?

No; for then his omniscience would be limited. He knows, then, at this precise moment what my wishes are, what I shall desire to-morrow, what I shall feel, and what I shall think. And is it possible that any movement should be accomplished

without the co-operation, or at least, without the permission of God? No; for then his omnipotence would be incomplete. It is absurd to imagine that the will of God can be absent from any particular portion of space, and from any specified moment of time; and, if present, it is equally absurd to suppose that it does not act with efficacy. The whole argument is comprised within these few words, and, considered in itself, nothing can be more convincing. It is evident that everything which we deduct from the knowledge and power of God, deducts from his infinity. He therefore knows everything, even in its most minute details, and he makes, or at least permits to be made, in perfect knowledge of their cause, the most apparently insignificant movements. The objection which immediately presents itself is the free will of man. Let us examine in the first place whether this liberty cannot be reconciled with the omniscience of God, and afterwards if it can be made to accord with his direct and particular intervention in the resolutions and affairs of men.

First, the liberty of man appears to contradict the omniscience of God. To know everything is not to know each event only as it arises; for this knowledge of the present, which does not embrace the future, is limited by the future; it is therefore incomplete. To establish omniscience, it is necessary that God should know the end simultaneously with the beginning, and that the night of ages should have no existence in his mind.

We understand that it must be thus in physical nature, which is subservient to invariable laws that nothing can derange. The author of these laws is perfectly acquainted with them, and therefore he knows all their various applications in their prescribed order, even to the last. We also comprehend the plenitude of divine thought in everything which furnishes us subject for argument. For to argue or reason, is nothing more than dividing the object of meditation, so as to accommodate it to the feebleness of our views. Perfect intelligence instantly perceives in any principle its final consequence, and does not require, as we do, the aid of intermediaries. But when the matter in question is neither to deduce the consequence of a principle, nor, what amounts to the same thing, to discover the effect in the cause, and all effects in the first originating cause,—when it relates to a free cause, master of itself, which has received from God the privilege of choice between two modes, according to its own inclination,—can it be that the determination of such a cause

should be really free, and that, nevertheless, before it has been adopted it is infallibly foreseen by the prescience of God ?

When I wish to prove my own liberty of action to myself, I analyse, I examine, I endeavour to verify it, before I come to a decision ; my mind deliberates ; often a most anxious deliberation, the principal employment, and vexation of my life.

While I give myself up to this examination of what is good and useful, I retain, as I may say, my freedom ; I confine it from action—I compel myself to resist its impatience ; I suspend it to give it a more profound and wiser bent ; but can I at the same time doubt its existence, and consequently my own responsibilty ? Nevertheless, God knows already, even while I undergo this effort of thought, the resolution I shall immediately adopt. And I, at length decide, I collect my strength, and point it in one settled direction, with the full, entire, and perfect conviction that I might have employed it otherwise, and that I possessed the power at that very moment of withholding, modifying, or increasing this effort of my own unfettered will.

But even at the instant when I assume this power to myself, all the moral and physical consequences of my act are already known, controlled, ordained; and more than this, they were so from all eternity, for nothing is unforeseen or unprovided for in the mind of God. In the most important epochs of history, a man springs up, a hero or a criminal (as often the one as the other), who persuades himself that he carries in his hand the destiny of mankind, because he has been permitted to effect the destruction of an empire. But God knew at what minute and by what agency that empire would be destroyed, at what precise instant this new power would fall. What then is liberty under those conditions ? An illusion, a mockery, with which the creator beguiles us. This is not one of the objections which can be utterly swept away. On the contrary, after the most specious refutations, the mind always finds itself beset by this difficulty : a man endowed with free will, and a God who infallibly foresees and pre-ordains all things. Sometimes recourse is had to comparisons. It is said that there are degrees of human foresight. One man, in reading history sees only a series of events, which succeed each other without connection. Another reduces the succession of occurrences to precise formulas, which explain and connect all things. In the same manner, in the course of life, one is always surprised by a result, while another is rarely deceived or seldom mistaken in his conjectures. Whence arises this difference ?

From a greater clearness of comparison, from a more profound knowledge of human nature. Then why should we be astonished that he whose vision is perfect, and who sounds the depths of the heart, should infallibly foresee that which men only conjecture or anticipate with a greater or less degree of probability.

How unsatisfactory is the answer, which derives the certain from the probable. The infallibility of divine knowledge creates the difficulty, because in removing from it all possibility of error, no excuse is left for freedom. If we were permitted to say, "God scarcely ever deceives himself," all would be simple and smooth. But a better reply is furnished by showing that God neither foresees nor remembers, and that everything is present to him at the same moment. Besides that this doctrine is true, and that we cannot imagine a succession or distinction of thoughts in God, without rendering him subservient to the law of time, which would deprive him of his eternity, it also brings back the problem of the reconciliation of divine prescience with human liberty, to that of the co-existence of the finite and the infinite. It belongs to the nature of the finite to be successive, and of the infinite to be the reverse. Thus the past, the present, and the future have only the character of succession in the finite, and with finite intelligences; while infinite intelligence embraces everything at the same glance. The question once brought back to these conditions, contradiction disappears and gives place to incomprehensibility. In a general sense we do not understand the connection of the finite with the infinite; it is a condition to which we are compelled to submit, whether it pleases us or not. But when we attribute prescience to God, and suppose, as a natural consequence, that a future must exist for him, as he is made to accompany the march of time, we introduce a palpable contradiction between the infallibility which is still accorded to him, notwithstanding this deterioration, and the absolute freedom of human resolutions. It is in this manner, by a mistake in estimating the nature of God, that we transform a difficulty into an impossibility.

Thus, to the first part of the doctrine, which consists in maintaining that God sees all things, even in their most minute details, the reply is, that it is difficult to reconcile this omniscience with free will, but that nevertheless the reconciliation is not impossible. Since then it is not impossible, and that there are besides many strong reasons why it should be admitted, we ought not to hesitate in adopting this conclusion. Does the

same argument apply to the second part, and must we also admit that God interferes in all our actions?

No! We have here no longer to deal with a difficulty or an incomprehensibility, but with a contradiction. In fact, if God takes part in our actions, human liberty and the efficacy of human will disappear. For where is the created power that can add anything to uncreated power? It is sufficient that God wills: by the fact of this will the thing that he desires exists. At most we could only say, that by the side of this more than sufficient power, there co-exists another power, that is entirely useless, and in fact, has the illusive semblance of acting. But this hypothesis gives rise to two difficulties: the first, that God would in that case have condemned us to live on illusions; the second, that human actions, which are often disgraceful and reprehensible, would become the acts of God himself.

It is very remarkable that the doctrine of co-operation thus understood embraces all the moral consequences, and, if we examine it closely, all the metaphysical deductions of pantheism.

An opinion which is attributed to Malebranche, because he adopted and developed it, but which in reality existed long before him, consists in saying that God himself produces all that is good and real; but that in his great benevolence he has granted to man the power of free consent to any given act,—a power which includes also the privilege of refusing his co-operation. If our desire tends towards the accomplishment of good, God effects it; if it opposes good, he refrains from interference. In the first case, we possess the merit of a good action which God has performed; in the second case, there is no action, for God has done nothing; but we have prevented him. This suffices for our responsibility and guilt. These are subtle, specious notions, and their mere statement sets common sense at defiance. It is not perfectly clear that we can only commit evil by refusing to do good, and that crime consists exclusively in omission.

This first point already approaches a sophism. Then we fall again, although in a minor degree, into the former difficulty, since, every action being directly accomplished by the power of God, the activity of man becomes an illusion.

It is repugnant to reason to think that God has created us in the belief that we can act, if in reality it is invariably he who acts. Let us add, that the hypothesis is useless; for to admit the co-operation of God in our actions, can arise from no other motive

than a desire of not limiting divine power; and it is evident that the non-interference to which God voluntarily restricts himself when human liberty tends to evil, is a positive limit to his omnipotence.

It is puerile, when a limit is acknowledged to that which is infinite, to create afterwards an hypothesis expressly to diminish this limit. Finally, what completely renders this hypothesis inacceptable is, that it directly contradicts the idea of divine perfection. This God, who awaits our resolution in order to act, is no longer the infinite deity of reason. If his thoughts and power are thus restricted to the resolutions of a limited intelligence, none of the arguments which are adopted to combat pantheism can hold their ground.

But this is not all: there are three components in human will, —deliberation, free determination, and execution. These three are connected, because the first is the cause and necessary condition of the second, and the second is the condition of the third; but this connection does not make them one fact, and each can be considered separately. It matters not that the two first pass within the mind of man. The doctrine of divine co-operation embraces everything, and psychological facts as well as others. Thus God is not absent either from deliberation, determination, or execution. We must take care not to think exclusively of execution. The two facts which precede it are still more important. While the mind, before it resolves, examines the consequences of that resolution on either side, and meditates over the useful and the upright, God is present at, and works with the deliberation. The result, if we only consider ourselves, does not depend solely upon the strength of our intellect. The will has some influence: it is that which can either concentrate or abstract our thoughts; which prolongs or abridges the examination; which urges us to incline more to a particular order of consideration. Why should God act in the place of human will when it operates upon an external object, and not interfere when it concentrates our intellectual strength entirely upon one point? He therefore interferes as much in deliberation as in execution, for there exists no reason why it should be otherwise. But from the moment when he thus interferes, he becomes the cause either of my precipitation and thoughtlessness, or of the maturity and wisdom of my opinions, and then what am I? What can I be but a plaything with which he amuses himself? What becomes of my individuality, responsibility, intelligence, and liberty? This simple supposition destroys

the whole character of man. There can be no evasions. All the subtleties in the world could never refute this consequence; namely, that the co-operation of God in the acts which I purpose renders me a nonentity.

With regard to the second term, determination, we have seen that in the system of divine co-operation the most favourable hypothesis allows a shadow of liberty to exist, since it accords to the human being the power of resisting or of consenting to the action of God. But upon what condition does the system make this concession? On the condition of contradicting itself, for we cannot understand why God should abdicate his omnipotence at the moment of resolution, to resume it again immediately for the execution of that which has been resolved. But if we were to swallow this difficulty, can we do so with the conviction that God has been present; that he has co-operated in our deliberation, and that then he has remained perfectly inactive at the decisive moment? Almost all the philosophers who have inclined to adopt this chain of ideas, admit that God, even at this decisive moment, still exercises a supreme influence over human will, and that he induces us to incline more in one direction than in another. Thus he leads rather than compels.

All that they suffer us to retain of free will is derived from the difference which may be found between these two words. As to the nature of this influence, its origin, its general or particular character, the light which accompanies it, and the efficacies with which it is endowed, the opinions and systems are innumerable. What benefit could we derive from their examination? Let us take them collectively, and say that they prove the inanity of the principle they attempt to explain. No; this co-operation which commences by a violation of justice, and ends with a farce, is not consistent with the ways and intentions of Providence. Let us reject it, for it savours of blasphemy. It remains true that man is a free agent; God has granted us this liberty, but he has not given us the power to explain it.

We shall say little upon the modified doctrine which consists in changing the divine co-operation into a simple permission, except that, like most compromises, it is equally insufficient to maintain a special Providence or to preserve liberty.

Doubtless, in one sense, nothing happens but by the permission of God, because it is true that by this permission we exist, and are free; but we are now speaking of a special per-

mission, accorded, in perfect knowledge of the cause, to each of our actions. Now, does not this permission resemble very closely the action itself?

When the mind of God conceives and permits an act, what is there to prevent this act from being immediately performed? Those who put forth such subtle distinctions, amuse themselves with words and mere equivocations.

But let us leave this war of details, which fatigues without enlightening; for, in truth, neither the doctrine of co-operation, nor even that of the divine permission, could merit discussion, were it not for the important part they have filled in history. There is a more simple, and, at the same time, a more exalted consideration, which refutes them with much fewer words, and is, at the same time, in stronger objection against them than the argument of free will, which we have just examined.

The multitude of special thoughts and actions with which God is occupied, not only in reference to every created being, but also as regards every individual thought and act of each individual creature, do they leave intact the idea of infinite Deity superior to time and space, and to whose nature multiplicity is a stranger?

Malebranche said that God humbled himself when he assumed the condition of creator. We cannot suffer ourselves to indulge in such bold language; but if God descended in order to create, what must he have done when he placed himself in a condition of thought and action, secondary to his own creatures? It is painful to reflect that those who admit the constant and particular co-operation of Providence, believe that by this they avoid assigning a limit to the power and knowledge of God; while, on the contrary, they only introduce into his nature, by this false notion of Providence, the multiplicity which is identical with non-existence.

So far from multiplicity existing in God, it cannot even influence him. An hypothesis is proposed to us, intended to enlarge our notion of divine perfection; and this hypothesis places God at the mercy of his creatures, compels him to live their life, to become, so to speak, one amongst them, to abandon his repose and immobility, and to associate himself in their frivolities and misfortunes. There is a problem in philosophy, which is, to understand how the unit can produce the multiple. The hypothesis that we now dispute adds to this single problem, a second

entirely of its own creation; that is, to comprehend how the finite can modify the infinite. These two words, modification of the infinite, present a most incongruous association. But that this proposed modification of the infinite should be produced by a finite being can never be admitted without overthrowing the very fundamental principles of metaphysics.

To hold to the exact terms of the theory, we should be obliged to say that God only knows himself, and interferes with nothing beyond his own being.

But the world exists. God has voluntarily produced it. Therefore, this fact must, of necessity, detract from the close definition of the principles laid down. We feel, without being able to understand why, that God knows and governs the world. We ask, if this knowledge, to confine ourselves only to it in the first place, is universal or particular? which is nearly the same as to ask, whether it is complete or incomplete. To our limited faculties, there is often an advantage in neglecting details, that we may perceive the whole with greater clearness. But infinite intelligence comprehends universal co-ordination without effort; and the unity of the whole is not in the least rendered obscure by the immense variety of details.

Thus, with regard to what touches on divine intelligence, the objection drawn from the unity of God is not more insoluble than that derived from the free will of man; and since God knows the world, he can, and ought to know everything that therein exists.

But it is quite the reverse with divine action. If it were simply said that the will of God is present everywhere as well as his intelligence, the affirmation must be admitted: but the question is not thus comprised. What is demanded in the system that we are examining, is, not that God could interfere in everything if he pleased, or even that he does interfere: upon these two points there is no argument: but it is asserted that he modifies his resolutions, that he interrupts the course of his own general laws, according to the use that man makes of his liberty. In a word, it is maintained that the plan of the universe is not fixed; that the resolutions of God are not immutable; that his views are not exclusively general; that his action is not single, and his serenity not absolute: but, on the contrary, that he is influenced by the movements of his creatures; that he replies by forming new resolutions, according to our wishes and our faults;

in a word (for there is no escaping from this deduction, which necessarily recurs), that he falls with us under the operation of time;—which is absurd. Once more, then, the doctrine of the direct and particular co-operation of God in human actions must be rejected.

We have here examined a system which at once compromises the immutability of God by a mistaken zeal for divine greatness, and the liberty of man, by a culpable indifference to this first attribute of our nature.

Let us now look into the doctrine which consists in maintaining that God directs the world, and particularly mankind, not at every moment by a special intervention, but by general laws. This is to re-consider the same question under another point of view, and to advance, in some degree, a counter-proof of the solution we have just given.

We have refuted the doctrine we reject, and we shall now develop that which appears to us to be solid and true.

Let us first dwell upon the manner in which divine intelligence applies itself to the knowledge of the world, and afterwards enquire how divine power intervenes in the government of the world.

We have seen that the true and perhaps only difficulty in philosophy, is the co-existence of the absolute and the relative. The absolute could do without the relative, but the relative exists, and cannot do without the absolute. It therefore follows, that the two co-exist, and that the relative depends upon the absolute. There are three systems by which this co-existence can be explained; the system of utter confusion, which from the idea of the absolute and that of the relative forms a single idea, into which contradictory terms must of necessity enter;—this is atheism: the system of separation, which gives to the relative a dependent but particular, or, so to speak, individual existence;—this is the doctrine of creation: and between the two is placed a sort of eclecticism, which separates notions and confounds substances;—this is pantheism; which thinks by this compromise to escape from the contradiction that forms the vice of atheism, and from the incomprehensibility of the first principle, which is the difficulty of creation: a double error, since it only at first distinguishes the absolute from the relative, to reunite them afterwards; and, on the other hand, the production of the multiple within unity is not more intelligible, and far from being more rational, than the production of the multiple apart from the

unit; unity remaining what it is, that is to say, infinite and immutable.

We admit without hesitation, and firmly adhere to the dogma of creation. We believe that time and space are only conditions of a created existence, and commence with it. God remains beyond both in his eternity, which cannot be fathomed by human thought.

Compelled to admit that God has created, we refuse to ascribe to him any of the attributes of the creature, and consequently we discard from his nature and action, everything which appertains to limit, that is to say, to movement; for time, space, motion and multiplicity are all the same things. Thus, God is immutable, and the act by which he creates is necessarily simple and immutable. God does not resemble an unskilful workman, who makes several attempts before he succeeds in producing a perfect model. He is not like the painter, who first disposes his canvas, mixes his colours, sketches his design, then transfers it, and finally arranges the light and shade.

It is evident that his mind conceived at the first glance that which was best; and, that at the same instant, his power produced the execution of his thought. It is not possible that such an artificer should repeat his work at intervals, or that the produce of such hands should be capable of improvement, or require repair.*

Thus, then, creation was complete at its birth, and possessed within itself at the first moment, all that past centuries have developed, and all that future ages can bring in their progressive course. Do we mean to convey by this that God quitted his repose to create, and that having produced a work which is sufficient for itself, he returned to his former indifference? Nothing can be further from our design. To speak thus is to divide God; to attribute to him a duration only equal to that of the world. What to us is development, is to him only co-ordination. Everything is successive to man, but immediate to God. Sometimes time explains certain consequences by demonstrating them in facts; at others, reason discovers them through investigation; but God neither thinks of reason nor history,

* "God desires that his conduct as well as his work should bear the character of his attributes. Not content that the universe honours him by its excellence and beauty, he even desires that the means he uses should glorify him by their simplicity, their fertility, their universality, and their uniformity."—*Malebranche, Ninth Conversation upon Metaphysics*, sect. 10.

because he is omniscient. The world which he created could not be unity, for then there would be two Gods; but it is made after the likeness of the unit, it is one; God sees it in this unity harmoniously engendering the multiple. Placed, as it were, at the other extremity of the real, we look on the world in its multiplicity, and we try to discover therein the traces of that great Unity who rules the universe. All our researches lead to this single end, for the application of sciences to common life are only corollaries or notes at the bottom of the page. On one side, experiments are made upon the motion communicated by bodies, with a view to discover the perpetual under the accidental, or rather a unit in the multiple; and hence it is established that this unity or law has more reality than the phenomena it governs, because it exists before and after these productions, and resembles more closely the nature of the creator. Then again, another profound metaphysician examines the laws of human nature; the world shows him the actions and sentiments of men; science lays open the unvarying causes which make them resemble each other, and occasion them to be moved by the same springs: here is another unity comprehended, another round of the ladder surmounted. When history is scrutinised, it becomes necessary to divide the task. One only verifies facts by patient research; he assists memory, and is less an historian than a help to him who composes the history; he performs the part of a compounder in an apothecary's shop. The historian follows after, to explain the connection of events and to demonstrate their meaning; or, rather, to show their unity and law. Thus, universal science slowly and painfully reveals a portion of the secret of creation.

Philosophy may be denominated science *par excellence;* for in some degree it gathers the produce of all the other sciences, unites all laws under more general heads, and obtains a clearer insight into the unity of the world, which gives it an approximate conception of the splendours of the creative Unity.

But, even before entering upon the threshold of philosophy, and while we keep within the limits of secondary science, we find many degrees of generalisation. The first effort of the scholar is, without doubt, to discover a single law or general formula; then a second, and a third. But when found, is he content to leave these laws in their isolated state? Does he not compare them together? Does he do nothing to reconcile them, and to discover their secret affinities? Even a secondary science only appears to approach its completion when it is systematised; that

is to say, when the various laws which it has discovered, are themselves included in one universal law, which embraces all the rest. When the rules of any particular science are once generalised and explained by one single rule, this science, thus summed up, becomes an element suitably prepared for philosophy, which applies to all sciences the same process of generalisation; and raising itself by their assistance above all others, collects and embodies all laws under one single and controlling law. In fact, the diversity of laws conceals an analogy so perfect, that taken separately they are nothing more than the various formulas of one single law. God created the original law; and the world, with all its bright expansion, has thus been filled with harmony. In this law every thing was included.*

It is this that, from earliest antiquity, all languages and all philosophers have pre-eminently named the Word. The Word stands alone, and in this single word all language is comprised. The act of creation is unique; and in it is contained that universal law which in every sense produces and governs, in the sense of duration and in that of history, with so delightful a harmony, that the soul is moved when it can even obtain a glimpse of one of its details. To discover imperfectly, to dream and to guess, is all that is permitted to human weakness. We maintain with confident certainty the unity of the system of the world, or the universal harmony of its laws; but it is not given to us to form a complete idea, a clear and entire view of this unity and harmony. God, on the contrary, who possesses the only perfect and unlimited intelligence, and who knew what he did in creating the world, embraces at a single glance the combined assemblage of his laws, and the whole series of history; because every thing, successive ages and extended space, are contained in the Creative Word.

Did not God know what he made? Or was he only half acquainted with it? What reasoning can show that any thing could exist without the knowledge of God? Is not his intelligence infinite? Is not all external existence the work of his hands? What power could interpose itself between the reality that God has willed, and the intelligence of the Creator?

On the other hand, does the knowledge of a principle consist in knowing it, without at the same time perceiving its consequences? Or of a fact, without connecting it with other facts

* "A more perfect world, but produced by less fruitful and simple means, would not bear as strongly as ours the impress of the Divine attributes."—*Malebranche, Ninth Discourse upon Metaphysics*, sect. 11.

to which it gives birth? Or of a law, without weighing its scope and efficacy—without seeing what it can and will effect? God, therefore, knows every thing, even to a worm or an atom, through his exclusive knowledge of the law of creation, or of the will which has produced that law; which means, in other words, through his sovereign and entire knowledge of himself. And not only does he know every created being, and the laws that govern all beings, but he perceives, at the same glance, every change and phase of development of each individual; for if a single movement escaped him in the immensity of time or space, there would then exist some law, the exact power of which he was unacquainted with; an absurd conclusion, as he would then, like us, confound the possible with the actual. The two human faculties, —experience, which beholds the real,—and reason, which demonstrates and measures the possible,—are, in some degree, independent of each other; because the secret of creation has not been imparted to us. Human experience cannot discover every thing that is real; neither can reason discern, amidst all possible things, those which are only so speculatively, or those which are so in fact, and which consequently have been, are, or will be realised. God, on the contrary, imagines nothing, discovers nothing; he sees all things, so that to his omnipotent intelligence the possible and the real are one. Thus, while we with difficulty seek in facts the traces of their causes, it is in causes that God perceives facts. His thought reaches the detail, at the same moment that he creates the general principle. We ascend, and God descends. We raise ourselves to him, he lowers himself to us, As often as by laborious study and investigation we succeed, as we may say, in raising our heads above the surface of the visible world, we feel as if we had achieved a great conquest; and if sometimes the hierarchy which, from unity to unity, raises itself to God, appears to us as a dream, we feel that austere and overwhelming joy which ever accompanies the happiest efforts of human thought. This happiness, which is but a flash of lightning, bears a faint and transitory resemblance to that which God eternally possesses.

The ancients were not mistaken, when they compared the world and its boasted science to a triangle, of which Divine Intelligence occupies the summit, while man crawls at the base. Therefore, let us feel assured, notwithstanding the difficulties which it is impossible to deny, that the thoughts of God (we do not yet speak of his actions) extend to the smallest details of inanimate nature.

But if God, in the unity of his intelligence, thus unerringly knows in every detail the consequences of the inflexible laws which he has imposed upon the physical world, can the same be stated of actions resulting from the free-will of a created being?

There is evidently here a very important distinction. God's law, whence arises order, extending to all time and space, is applied indiscriminately and without changing its nature, to the different beings that compose or inhabit the earth; and it is this variety of application which leads us to mistake one law for many; for by the peculiar disposition of our limited faculties, the thing we are first able to perceive is variety, and we discern it more easily and completely than we do analogy. These multiplied laws, which are, in fact, but one law, may be divided into two leading classes, each defined according to its specific characteristics. The laws of one class govern the material world, where nothing exists but secondary causes, which are in some degree charged to transmit without modifying the action of the first cause; these laws operate with absolute regularity, and the deviations we sometimes fancy we discover, belong only to our own ignorance. The laws appertaining to the other class, control the moral world, or rather the human soul, which alone of all created things has been endowed with the power of following its own inclinations, and consequently, the power of infringing the rule. What the law effects in the physical world is, in fact, effected by God himself the author of physical law; but in the moral world, where the law is compulsory without being necessitating, it is man who operates instead of God; therefore in this order of things phenomena arise, which are not comprehended and, as it were, involved in the law.

He who possesses a perfect knowledge of physical law, ascertains by this knowledge all the applications of that law; but it is possible to imagine an intelligence which, while possessing a complete acquaintance with moral law, is yet ignorant of the infringements to which it is intended to apply. Why not at once admit that such is, as regards us, the position of the Divine nature? If it be right to say that God knows nothing of the individual, for the individual himself, but to understand more thoroughly the general system, and the general law; it must then be concluded that he may not be as well acquainted with the determinations of man, as he is with the movements of physical nature.

This supposition, upheld by plausible arguments, has been

entertained by several schools, who flattered themselves that they thus escaped the difficulty created by the co-existence of the Divine presence and of human liberty. Nevertheless, the mind cannot resign itself to a doctrine which almost entirely renders God a stranger to man. How is it possible to suppose that any change in the world can be produced, any sensation experienced, or any resolution formed, without the knowledge of God? It is useless to reply that this does not proceed from impotence in God, but from unworthiness in the object. This answer, though it comes from Aristotle,* is not sufficient to satisfy the mind. Man is not unworthy of occupying an intelligence which condescends to know, and take an interest in, the rest of the world. And how could God have any knowledge of man, if he were acquainted only with his capabilities and not their application? Is not this as if we were to say that we are acquainted with the laws of motion, but know nothing of motion itself?

God is as certainly the author of moral law, as he is of all other laws. He who institutes a law, does not remain in ignorance of the execution of what he has decreed; he who issues an order, certainly desires to know whether it is obeyed. From the moment when we separate our actions from the superintending eye of Providence, we shake the very foundation of moral law, take away from man the possibility of a sanction, and deprive him at once of his father and his judge.† Human life cannot be indifferent to, or unknown to God, who is at once our legislator and rewarder.

The peculiar nature of the moral law, so different from all other laws, does not prevent God's knowledge of human actions; but it probably prevents our being able to comprehend or explain how he acquires this knowledge.

This impossibility, following so many others, is not intended to arrest our progress. We believe in every thing that is demonstrated, whether we can explain it or not. Besides, we are at present really dealing with an impossibility, respecting which we cannot even hazard an hypothesis. Our freedom of action is complete in itself; but the motives which influence its exercise are common to all mankind, and the sphere in which it is developed is a limited one. We ourselves, by a profound study of the human heart, can predict almost to a certainty the conduct of an

* *Aristotle, Metaphysics*, book x. chap. vii.

† "But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore."—*St. Luke*, chap. xii. verse 7.

individual man, in any given situation; and this power of foresight is increased, when we are able to obtain a perfect acquaintance with all the exterior circumstances of the case, and when we can measure the strength of the agent against the force of what he has to encounter. If sometimes in particular instances, even when endowed with all that constitutes human wisdom, we find ourselves mistaken, such is never the result as regards the generality; so little is there of original distinction in human nature, and so much does one man resemble another! Therefore, God who comprehends all laws, has an infallible cognizance of all human proceedings; and as he is able to penetrate deeper than ourselves into the secrets of our minds and hearts, he is acquainted with all our resolutions and motives. It is thus that we live under the eye of God, and none of our sentiments, thoughts, or acts can escape his observation.

We must now, however, inquire whether God co-operates in the actions of man? We have encountered obstacles in reconciling the existence of free will with omniscience; and we are prepared for similar obscurity in a question affecting nothing less than the explanation of the connection between time and eternity. If we could clearly expound this, we should be able to comprehend both God and creation. This problem may, therefore, rest unsolved without exciting our alarm; and taking into consideration the absolute difference of nature which divides its two conditions, it is not one of those manifest contradictions at which reason recoils. But the doctrine of God's co-operation in man's actions cannot be viewed in the same manner. To say that God ordains that man shall believe himself the performer of an act while it is God alone who acts in him, is at once an inadmissible contradiction, repugnant to the grandeur and veracity of Deity. Let us suppose, nevertheless, that we content ourselves to receive it; how can we maintain the idea of God being the author of so many defective and evil works? It is from this inevitable conclusion that the dogma of pantheism has ever been found peculiarly offensive to those who deny it; and, considered in this point of view, we probably see the repulsiveness of its character more plainly exhibited than in the acknowledged doctrines of the school. They argue, God is the mover of our good deeds, while we only are responsible for the evil, therefore imperfection proceeds from ourselves: this is subtle reasoning, but utterly unsound; the least objection is, that it sets forward an hypothesis without any foundation. Is it not evident that, if God has

bestowed upon us the power of resistance, he could equally, if he had so pleased, have given us the power of action? Why then do they embarrass themselves with this fancied necessity of extending the divine intervention to all things, when they are forced to renounce it on such an important point? They are too apt to forget that, in treating of omnipotence, there can be no question of degree. If it be admitted that the almighty power of God is subject to any restriction, no matter what, the whole problem is thus laid down in its full force; and to imagine any thing gained by lessening this restriction, is to insult the majesty of the Infinite.

Finally, here is an objection against which the doctrine of co-operation cannot hold ground. If God, as the hypothesis maintains, is no stranger to any of our movements, neither is he a stranger to what precedes, accompanies, constitutes, or results from the exercise of human will. Can it be asserted that God produces the movement of my arm, which I believe that I produce myself, and yet that he is ignorant of my intention of moving my arm? Why have I even formed this intention? to produce some advantage which I propose to myself. From whence do I derive the idea of this advantage? according to the hypothesis, from God; for every thing belonging to me, both external and internal, is moved by God: he does all, and he must therefore be the author of my sin, my passion, and my precipitate folly. In whatever way we examine this hypothesis, whether it advocates or overthrows the existence of liberty, there is one thing it invariably destroys, and that is the holiness of God. Let us cast aside this impious proposition, and loudly declare that man's liberty is complete, man's will efficacious, and that God does not co-operate in human actions.

Why should man be denied the plenitude of his personality? Those who refuse to accord this in order to establish the dogma of special providence, are generally the same who exaggerate this very personal freedom when they seek to refute pantheism. Now, it is not more difficult to admit the free agency of man and the efficacy of his will, than to accord the isolated existence of his substance. As in advocating the doctrine of creation we acknowledge the actual being of a certain substance apart from God, so we may also acknowledge the existence of a free agency apart from God. The power of God subsists notwithstanding the power of man, and the infinite substance of God, notwithstanding the individuality of human substance. Thus, while we know that God penetrates our most hidden thoughts, we are

compelled to allow that man has the uncontrolled government of himself, and that the liberty which God has bestowed upon him is a fact, and not a delusion.

Here another question immediately springs up. If man acts independently of God, it is man only who regulates human society; and we must, therefore, condemn whatever seeks to show the finger of God in the history of events. Not so: God in appointing us our part has retained his own. He has made our minds and hearts, and measured our strength. Through these two points he holds humanity in his hand. Each of us works in his own way, one ill, another well; this man does much, that man little. We are responsible for our faults and omissions, for the consequences of our sacrifices and successes; but the motive influence originating from one man, no matter how powerful it may be, cannot extend very far. When we ostentatiously talk of the man of the age, we use an unreasonable epithet of aggrandisement. If this individual had been wanting, another would have been found. Most of those who appear so great, owe their greatness to accident; they are a sort of optical delusion. Undoubtedly, the world has its heroes; but he alone who searches the heart, can tell whether those unknown to fame are not often the greatest of heroes. We measure things according to their success; and of all proofs that can be instanced of human weakness, this is the most impressive. A general forms a magnificent plan of battle, which constitutes him a great commander: the sun is in his eyes, and he is defeated; a chance for which he is not responsible: nevertheless, our opinion is formed upon the result. Let us thoroughly comprehend that the truest distinction between man and man, proceeds from the opposite qualities of vice and virtue. Genius is real, but it counts for little. Every individual man regulates his own life, but God composes history.

A single point now remains to be examined. Without any continued co-operation, God knows all the fluctuations of human will. Does he ever interfere with the course of events, and from love to man change the order of universal law? The answer is furnished by Malebranche without hesitation. No; God alters none of the decrees he has issued; or, to speak more correctly, he has issued but one decree, the virtue of which extends to all creation: this decree is as immutable as the will of God himself. To believe in the fluctuations of Divine will, is to fall into gross paganism.* It is to limit God by time and space, and to despoil

* "Even Plato, that magnificent reasoner, when he says that God made the

him of his infinity. If he is not immutable, he cannot be infinite; neither can he be immutable if his will is subject to modification. Can he be the same Deity before and after this modification? These words, "before" and "after," convey no intelligible meaning when applied to God. The eternal can neither change, move, nor endure. If it were even possible for God to undergo these variations without ceasing to be eternal, wherefore should he change, except to arrive at something better? To change to what is worse is the attribute of a depraved nature. God, then, is susceptible of amendment? he requires experience to gain enlightenment? he will obtain increased ability with the lapse of time?—All these propositions verge upon blasphemy. God at once sees and does that which is best. He corrects nothing. He does not, like us impotent beings, aim twice at a single object. His intentions are not multiplied and successive, the last correcting the first. Finally, to move him, if he could be moved, would require a cause adequate to the consequence; some impression must be produced upon his infinite and immutable nature, and by a limited being. Is this possible? Can the action of a finite being have power to change the decrees of infinity and eternity? We answer, that it is impossible.

Metaphysics prove nothing, if they do not prove the immutability of God; and if they demonstrate this, we must declare that God never changes his laws, which amounts to saying, that he never changes himself.*

Let us consider science: upon what does it rest? on the fixity of the laws of nature. To what does it lead? to divine immutability. What are its daily acquisitions? the demonstration of some new law, or the discovery of some fresh analogy between known laws. If we did not know beforehand that nature is not regulated by chance, we should never think of reasoning or experimentalising; and if God did not appear as a

world in his own mould and pattern, savours of the rust and moss of antiquity. . . . . He represents the Divine Architect as a miserable bricklayer, or a mason, toiling and sweating at the fabric and government of the world."—*Plutarch, On the Opinions of Philosophers*, book i. chap. vii.

* "When God performs a miracle, and does not operate in accordance with the general laws with which we are acquainted, I believe that he either acts from the consequence of other general laws unknown to us, or that that which he then does, is determined by certain circumstances which he has foreseen from all eternity, in the creation of this simple, solemn, and unchangeable act; which is included, not only in the general laws of his ordinary providence, but also in the exceptions to these same laws."—*Malebranche, Eighth Discourse on Metaphysics*, sect. 8.

luminous column at the termination of all the avenues of science, how should we be able to direct our route, measure our progress, or determine our discoveries? But if unity, harmony, and immutability govern science to this extent, how shall any one presume to tell the world that it reveals to us a capricious will, disordered movements, and perpetual derogations from rule? and how can they venture to represent God as susceptible of all the emotions of human passion—anger, pity, and repentance? If such hypotheses as these were once admitted, all our knowledge of God and the world would be shaken to its foundation.

Let us also ask what, under such conditions, would become of divine justice? If God interferes in the affairs of man, is his intervention always similarly bestowed under similar circumstances? If so, this doctrine is only a snare, and this intervention, which is necessarily uniform, is nothing more than the government of Providence, by which the universe is regulated according to its general laws. But if God interposes to-day, and refuses his concurrence to-morrow; if he grants to one what he denies to another; if he arbitrarily decides between men; if he becomes like one of us, accessible to the emotions and influences of anger and pity, irresolute in his determinations, weak in his intentions and his acts;—then Providence should change its name, and call itself *Destiny*.

Let us leave such human gods to pagan theologians, and at once abandon the idea that to preserve the liberty of God it is necessary for us to believe that he is susceptible of passion. Let us, then, conclude that God knows all things, even to the most minute details; that he leaves the will of man perfectly uncontrolled; and finally, that nothing can modify the decrees of his infinite and immutable wisdom. The father of a family makes no difference between his children.

The doctrine which we here lay down, though almost universally admitted in philosophy, appears at the first glance to be very severe and harsh. Does not the God who governs the world by general and inflexible laws, lose in beneficence what he gains in majesty?

In rendering God accessible to our desires and prayers, his majesty is perhaps diminished, but he is unquestionably represented as more amiable. Why place God at such a distance from man that we can scarcely obtain access to him? If this imaginary perfection, of which the metaphysician dreams, were carried a little farther, it would end in a solitary God, who existed alone, a

stranger to the world and to the human race. Such a being our God is not, seeing that he has willed creation. Ought not the certainty of creation to qualify the doctrine of immutability?

Since God, without derogation, has created man, can he not preside over him with the solicitude of a father, direct him in the individual course of his life, afford him encouragement and aid, and bend the laws which govern physical nature, to the graver necessities of the moral world when they demand such a concession?

Great pains are taken to show that God is occupied with, and directs the world. This doctrine is, in fact, of all others the most important to man; but only on the condition that this operative God loves, listens to, protects, and sustains us. It is not in our power to be contented with a protection which ignores individuals and recognises only races. To reduce us to this state of isolation and indifference, is to banish from us the God, the Providence, and the Father, which it has been pretended to bestow upon us.

These complaints are unjust; they misconstrue the doctrine they desire to combat. God knows each of us by his name, and assists in all our works. He does not regard man with indifference, for he is love; but he does not change his laws for him, because his laws are the work of his infinite intelligence, and cannot vary according to our ill-regulated desires and frivolous passions. He has given us the world, for it is evident that we reign in the sphere in which we are placed. The power he has accorded to us of transforming physical force, is such, that after three thousand years of civilisation we have not yet discovered its limit. Finally, that he is not indifferent to the march of society is proved by his having instituted the law of progress; and that which demonstrates beyond all question that he is not indifferent to the interests of the humblest individual, is that he has reserved us for a life of future happiness, and that he daily gives us the means and aid which we require to reach it.*

Duty here below: after this life, heaven.

This is what God has granted to us. What more can a God and Father do for his children?

* In the *Dissertations of Arrian*, Jupiter justifies himself for having placed Epictetus in the miserable condition of a slave. "O Epictetus, if it had been possible, I would have made thee free. I have at least given thee the power of thinking and willing; with this thou art dependent on no one." The slave replies, "I am content: I thank the gods."

We murmur at the difficulties of our prescribed path. Such complaints are unworthy of men. What signifies our being torn by the brambles, if we are certain of reaching the goal? It is base, and even cowardly, to become uneasy or impatient. One thing, above all others, we should struggle to learn—how to endure; another we ought equally to forget—pollution. Blessed be the name of God!

PART THE THIRD.

IMMORTALITY.

CHAPTER I.

PROOFS OF THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

"The immortality of the soul is a matter which so essentially concerns man, and touches him so nearly, that we must have lost all sense of feeling if we are indifferent on this engrossing subject."—*Thoughts of Pascal.* Art. IX. Edit. Havet., p. 133.

It is the same with the immortality of the soul as with the eternity of God. Ever since the dawn of philosophy, attempts have been made to demonstrate by the most convincing arguments that could be discovered, that this terrestrial pilgrimage is but an episode in human life, and that after the tragedy by which it is terminated, we are destined to obtain, for the first time, true possession of ourselves. It is quite evident, that the most important truths are those which the human mind studies and examines with its earliest impressions. The great fact we are now about to consider, ranks with the existence of a supreme being, the free-will of man, and the principle of immutable justice. Not to speak of the East, where history remains enveloped in darkness, to whatever period of antiquity we trace back the Greek systems of ethics and theology, we find the different schools divided upon these great questions. Even amongst the immediate disciples of Pythagoras, when human thought was, as we may say, only beginning to awaken, we are surprised to find doctrines which require only a little more precision and arrangement to entitle them to a definitive position in the records of science. Socrates, who always appeared to be intent on the practical application of philosophy, never failed to employ the full strength of

his genius, at the same time daring and sagacious, in the elucidation of these three or four leading problems on which the entire destiny of man revolves. Such was the activity of speculative intelligence amongst the Greeks, at that epoch, that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul very nearly complete, is to be found in the *Phædo* of Plato. We observe there, under a close and, stringent form of logic, all the demonstrations of this commanding dogma; every objection is anticipated and refuted; and as a consequence even more surprising, Plato discriminates with great vigour, the immortality of the soul, from the second part of the proposition, which turns upon the nature and conditions of that immortality. He shows that the demonstration of the immortality of the soul belongs irrevocably to science, but that we are condemned, perhaps for ever, to mere blind conjectures as to the sequel: and while exhibiting this evidence of superior sense, he throws over the unknown world, that we incessantly imagine without being able to define, the living radiance of his own genius.

Such completeness of result, obtained, as we may say, at the first blow, on this question and several others, constitutes one of the objections which has ever since been raised against philosophy. It can teach us nothing new, they say; and creeps slowly on, relying on mere common-places. Happy would it be if this reproach were well founded! It is unquestionably true that upon certain points, and the immortality of the soul is amongst the number, philosophy is a perfect science. What would they not say, if it were otherwise, of the barrenness of a science which, after a lapse of more than two thousand years, should be still unable to enlighten as to the duration of our being? Providence has, to a certain extent, endowed us with a peculiar faculty for the solution of the problems which are the most important to man, and has given over the rest as food for human curiosity. For this reason there can scarcely, at the present day, be any question as to adding any thing new to the proofs of the existence of God, of the immortality of the soul, and of the free-will of man: we can scarcely hope to give to earlier demonstrations, superior clearness and precision. We have only to follow devoutly in the track of our predecessors, congratulating ourselves that we find the road distinctly indicated and trodden. The true philosopher abhors invention: he trembles when he stands alone. He ought to be always ready to break a lance against tradition and authority, if compelled by the strong evidence of reason; but above all, he

should ardently wish never to be reduced to that formidable alternative. In affirming that the demonstration of the immortality of the soul is complete, and that science can advance nothing new upon this point, we have no desire to compare that demonstration with those, for instance, of geometry, which compel the assent of the most rebellious minds. No historical or philosophical demonstration can possess the character of evidence peculiar to the deductive sciences; and one of the reasons by which scepticism is encouraged and propagated is, that we are too much in the habit of requiring from moral knowledge, a species of light which it is incapable of bestowing. The vast importance of the result concurs, moreover, in rendering coherence difficult. It is no small matter to establish by a process of reasoning, that the soul of man is immortal. This is worthy of being maturely considered, and demands careful inquiry as to whether the arguments are sound, and the objections refutable. We should be less scrupulous if the question only involved the equality of two angles of a triangle, opposite to the apex.

Let us add also, that the special arguments which serve to establish these great fundamental truths, ought only to be considered as the summary of a complete philosophy; and even if they did not possess the force which the school attributes to them, we should not therefore be entitled to doubt, upon that ground, the principles which they are intended to establish. But these principles are so mutually and inseparably linked with the substance of the doctrine, that they must stand or fall with the doctrine in its totality. Herein lies the true utility of systems which unreasonably terrify the ignorant million. If a school of philosophy unites together in one connected chain, all its various components, the existence of God, Providence, human liberty, the immortality of the soul, and the principle of justice, in such manner that each supposes and leads to the other, and we cannot suppress one without renouncing all the rest, the whole of these dogmas find in this connection a strength and consistency which they could never derive from the most unanswerable arguments. I believe invincibly in the immortality of the soul, because I cannot abandon that conviction, without giving up at the same time every thing else that I believe.

Nevertheless, let us not think it either superfluous or trivial, to take a regular review of the arguments of the school. The most staunch believer has moments of langour and doubt. These defined and precise formulas in which a creed is concentrated,

possess at least the advantages of bringing it in a few moments distinctly before the mind.

The first battle to be won against doubt must be fought upon another ground; for we cannot be permitted to discuss immortality, until immateriality is fully demonstrated. Every thing that has body or substance is mortal. All that is divisible will be divided. Is the soul a simple faculty of the body, corporeal and substantial? If so, it must be perishable. If, on the contrary, it is immaterial, it becomes extremely difficult to admit, without proof or analogy, that this indivisible principle should be destined to perish.

Before we examine the nature of the soul, and also that of the body, to show that they are distinct and incompatible, it will be well to propose this general question: Are there in existence only bodies, or are there one or more spiritual essences?

We might even change the proposition as follows: Is there a God? If there is, he must be a spirit, and nothing else. Here is a great step made, in a matter of fact, without effort. Either the materialists are atheists; or, if they believe in God, they must at once abandon all the arguments they are accustomed to extract from the pretended impossibility of the existence of a substance purely spiritual.

As soon as we have established that the Creator of the world is a spirit, it becomes extremely difficult to comprehend why the world should contain only bodies.

If we press the arguments of the materialists closely, we shall see that they all rest upon this axiom;—the existence of a spirit is impossible. With all those who acknowledge the existence of God, materialism vanishes entirely.

What is called a body? A substance possessed of extent, colour, taste, odour and weight. There are bodies which do not unite every one of these characteristics, but the first, of necessity, belongs to all.

What is understood by a spirit? A being endowed with activity, sensibility, and the power of thought.

In what does materialism consist? In maintaining that every active, sensible, and thinking substance is of necessity extended.

How is this thesis to be proved? Thus: All that is real is necessarily extended. Or thus: the properties of extent are indispensable to the exercise of thought, sensibility, and will.

Not so: all that is real is not necessarily extended—for there is a God.

Again, not so: extent is not indispensable to the exercise of thought, for again—there is a God.

Let us dwell a little on this assumption of the materialists, that extent or space is necessary to thought: this can never be either demonstrated or understood. No materialist, in any school, at any epoch of history, has ever been able to arrive at the proof. There is no analogy whatever between the intellectual functions and the qualities of extent. It is impossible to imagine that an act of human will or intelligence could result from a certain bodily movement, from a form or colour of the cerebral matter. Above all, it is impossible to prove this. Therefore, the materialist theory can never be established upon scientific grounds. It has not even a semblance of probability. It is the most rank and least specious of all extravagant paradoxes. We must not take the converse of this proposition, as is too often the case, and suppose that the spiritualists are called upon to prove the existence of spiritual essence. This is not the predicament; on the contrary, the materialists are bound to prove the legitimacy of their denial. They wish to force us to confound two natures that we conceive to be entirely distinct, of which we form separate ideas, which have opposite attributes and no corresponding analogy whatever. The attempt is undoubtedly difficult; so much so, that no one has ever yet accomplished it. They confine themselves to gratuitous assertions. They have appealed to the senses as witnesses, as if all the world did not join in the conviction that the senses can only perceive that which is accessible to their influence and capabilities. Most assuredly no one has ever seen or touched a soul. But, in retort, has any one ever seen or touched a reflection? a grief? a resolution? Shall we thence conclude that grief and suffering have no existence? We possess a faculty by which we estimate extent, and another of a very different quality, which instructs us to distinguish pain. Since pain and extent have not the most remote analogy, since we perceive them separately and through extremely opposite faculties, and since nothing establishes that the one cannot exist without the other, we might, without more absurdity, maintain the following thesis—all pain is in an extent; or this—all extent is comprised in a pain.

These modes of reasoning are very simple and common-place; the point to ascertain is, whether they are solid. It would be ridiculous to despise an argument, because it is hackneyed or adapted to the comprehension of the world at large. It is of much more value that common sense alone is necessary to refute the paradox of the materialists.

Not only is their paradox incredible in the highest degree, but it is purely unfounded; yet if we were reduced to the necessity of proving the existence of the spirit, we should find no deficiency of arguments. The spirit is indivisible: the body extended, which means divisible; for what is extent, if not divisibility? We challenge our opponents to conceive an indivisible body or a divisible soul. I am what I am; I cannot be the half of myself, but my body may be hacked into atoms. Thus my body is not entirely myself. We possess two contradictory characteristics; my body that of being divisible, and I myself that of not being divisible. How, then, is it possible that we can be the same substance?

The materialists raise an argument upon the fact that the soul moves the body; hence they conclude that the soul is corporeal. But whence do they derive the principle that a body cannot be moved, except by another body? In truth, they have invented it. It is neither a self-evident axiom, nor a demonstrated fact. We are justified in treating this vaunted principle as lightly as we should any other axiom of similar value, which it might suit them to invent gratuitously, to help the exigence of their case. We grant that it is difficult to comprehend and explain how the mind moves the body. But let them explain, if they can, how a given body moves another body? We fancy that we comprehend this transmission of movement, while, in fact, we comprehend it not. It is familiar to us, and this is all. We have described it a thousand times, we produce it at every moment, and we have determined its laws. We can ascertain quite as much as regards the movement of a body by the soul. But a vast abyss lies between description and explanation. The materialists may turn against us the impossibility we are under of explaining the action of the soul upon the body, when they are really able to explain the action of one body upon another.

We now, in turn, propose a fact for their consideration. Let them tell us how a body moves itself without being moved.* Is

* "It is not so much intelligence which constitutes the specific distinction between man and the animal creation, as the quality of free agency. Nature dictates to every animal, and the brute obeys. Man receives the same impression; but he feels himself free either to acquiesce or resist; and above all, in the consciousness of this liberty, the spirituality of his soul exhibits itself. For physics explain, in some manner, the mechanism of the senses and the formation of ideas; but in the power of will, or rather of selection, and in the sentiment of this power, we recognise acts purely spiritual, nothing of which can be explained by mechanical laws."—*J. J. Rousseau, Discourse upon the Origin of Inequality amongst Men.* Ed. Lahure, vol. i. p. 90.

it not true that, when we observe a movement in any particular place, we affirm that it has been caused by some other movement? Nevertheless, the soul moves itself without being moved. Is this a property of little importance? Can it be disputed? Is the soul occupied or controlled by another nature? And if the invariable law of bodies is not to move without being moved, are we not compelled to say that an existence which is not subject to that law, cannot be a body?

But the soul is not only independent of this law, but of every other law of physical nature. It has laws belonging to itself, which apply to itself alone, and have nothing to do with the rest of the world. And, finally, as a last difference, which is not the less fundamental, it can escape from its own peculiar laws. On whichever side we turn, we discover nothing but distinctions and incompatibilities, without the slightest analogy; in materialism, especially, we encounter an improbable and thoroughly unfounded affirmation, or one established upon axioms evidently apocryphal. We are, therefore, compelled to have recourse to the dogma of the immateriality of the soul.

The materialists appear to have conceived a most exaggerated idea of that quality of physical nature which is called the three dimensions, or space; as they introduce it on all occasions, and make it a necessary appendage to a substance, in the attributes of which the most sagacious mind cannot discover any thing which has the most remote affinity to length, breadth, or thickness.

Has space any particular virtue to call for this infatuation? Has it more reality than other forms of existence? more than thought, for example? Quite the contrary: thought is something of itself; space is only the result of a comparison; it is not a distinct being. Must we permit space and time, these consequences of our nothingness, to usurp such a place in our minds, that we are to take them for realities, and realities of the most actual character? For many centuries, space, which is not even an existence, has been set up as a sort of idol by the materialists. This chimera obstructs their view, and makes them see the whole world on the wrong side.

If we examine the question more closely, it is not the mind which impedes us, but the body. We comprehend more readily the movements and mechanism of thought. The existence and nature of the body is full of mysteries. We think little of them, because we are continually influenced by the bodies that surround us. They please, terrify, or threaten us, they inspire us with

pleasure or pain; they affect us through the eyes and ears; they follow us even in our dreams. Familiar intercourse deprives them of all the characters of an enigma. We persuade ourselves that space, which is only an affinity, has actual existence; that colour belongs to coloured bodies, while colouring itself is only a relative quality; we suffer ourselves to say that the fire is hot, because it burns us, as if there were some analogy between the sensation that we express by the word heat, and the qualities of substance that we denominate fire. Reid justly observes, that we should not be more insensate if we supposed that the point of the needle which pricks us, possesses some inherent property corresponding with the pain occasioned by the puncture. Metaphysical science has at least this advantage, that it delivers us from the besieging influence of the body, and replaces it in its proper position. First, it deprives it of that rich casket of colours which dazzles us; then it takes away cold, heat, roughness, and polish. It reduces weight, form, and extent, from positive to comparative existences. Time and space become simply an arrangement of co-ordination and succession. Out of all this immensity and noise nothing remains but a mass of unknown causes, of which we perceive the effects. Where are these effects? In ourselves. They constitute our individual modifications, feelings, sentiments, and ideas: our knowledge amounts to this; beyond this point, all is involved in darkness and problems which we cannot solve. No one can be allowed to pretend that these unknown causes of ascertained effects are better comprehended and explained than the facts of human nature. The direct contrary is the truth. We must, with Descartes, begin with our individual and internal identity, study it long and anxiously in itself, bring before the mind the representation of all its impressions, and when we have completed and fathomed this isolated examination, we then reach the external world, which presses closely from without, and forces itself into the domains of thought. World, what dost thou desire of me? What is the true nature of this being? Canst thou be a phantasmagoria without reality? A bridge is thrown between man and the world: Kant might have been in error for hesitating so long before he ventured to pass it; but, in truth, of the two banks divided by this bridge, that on which I stand is the more real. The other may possibly be a mirage, but truth is on this side.

The materialists extract the semblance of an argument from the necessity under which the mind feels itself placed, of using

the body as a medium of thought. They suppose that the human mind would remain indefinitely inactive, if a certain modification, received from the body and transmitted to the brain through the nerves, did not in some manner excite or stir the faculties. No sooner is this physical movement communicated to the reflective organ, than it begins to operate according to laws peculiar to itself, continually remodified and varied by impressions derived from without. If the secondary organs, which we denominate organs of sense, either become effaced or removed, if the nerves lose their efficacy, if the brain itself, the seat of thought, is enfeebled by disease, immediately the faculty of reflection is injured; sometimes it loses strength altogether, and at others becomes weakened in particular applications. This double phenomenon almost invariably accompanies old age. We say proverbially, "He retained his faculties to the last moment." This sufficiently shows that the mind decays and wears out with the body. Again, language supplies the materialists with a favourite argument. Thought, and all the various modifications of the soul, are necessarily expressed by words, or rather by traced characters, by gesticulations or sounds, and always through physical agency. These words, which not only serve to express the thought, but to preserve it in the memory and to develop it by reflection and reasoning, are at first merely images, or *onomatopœia* (imitative sounds), and affect only material objects. Their signification amplifies by degrees, until they are used to express imaginary beings; but this operation, which is called metaphor, can only introduce into the mind the notion of incorporeal essences through mutual conventionality and the aid of abstraction. This means, in fact, that what is incorporeal exists only in our thoughts, like the chimeras which we fabricate through our faculty of analysis and recomposition; but that every existing thing is physical body, and there is nothing that is not both extended and divisible.

This reasoning is specious, but not sound. What is said respecting the common destiny in this life, of the soul and the body, is very easily explained by this consideration, that the soul, being intended to dwell for a given time in a body, and in the material world, must of necessity be placed during that period in communication with them. It has, therefore, corporeal organs, which serve as messengers to the other bodies, and convey from them the impressions these organs are constructed to produce, and which operate in return as organs to the soul to re-act upon these bodies, and to move and modify them. It is sufficiently apparent

that the action of our intellectual faculties must, to a certain extent, depend on these instruments. Every workman relies on the implements that he uses, and the strongest eyes in the world would avail little if they were condemned to see only through the medium of a defective spying-glass. It is not the eyes that see, but it is through the eyes that we see. It is perfectly natural that, being enclosed in a body, we should only perceive other bodies through the intervention of a bodily organ; but it is also most likely that, if we were without bodily substance, we should see physical objects more clearly than we now distinguish them with the eyes. All these different instruments and organs are helps to human weakness; they demonstrate at the same time that they alleviate our deficiencies. It is thoroughly amusing to find men persuading themselves that the eyes are necessary to sight, because, in their actual state of physical imprisonment, they can only see through these windows. We may say the same of language. The soul is, to a certain extent, concealed behind a body which it employs to make signals; and another soul that it addresses is equally imprisoned. All that is external to itself can only reach it through the eyes or the ears; consequently, the corporeal sign is necessary both to speak and to hear the reply. If we suppose that the two bodies are destroyed, and that the two souls remain (an hypothesis, at the least, extremely intelligible), these two souls could enter into communication, without the intermediary of a material signal. They tell us that language is necessary, not only to the transmission, but to the elaboration, of thought. This is quite true; and this goes to prove that the human mind is extremely weak and imperfect; and that it requires, in order to pursue its ideas as they successively arise, a word easily remembered, and which recals them when they are wanted. But does not the slightest reflection on this internal use of speech, demonstrate that it proceeds from the weakness, and not from the energy or essence, of thought? Imagine a perfect mind; it will need no language. The less imperfect it is, the less will it require the assistance of words. The conclusion may be universally applied, and the result will be the same. A man is not much to be dreaded with no weapon but his nails; he becomes dangerous with a sabre in his hand; but he can never be as formidable as a lion without arms.

It is not correct to extract an argument from the metaphorical character of many or of all languages. This point regards only the sign, and has no relation to the thought. The idea of an

immaterial object introduces itself in the train of the metaphor I employ to the mind I am addressing, but my own mind necessarily conceived the idea before I adopted or sought for the metaphor.

This remark suffices to dispose of an objection which is incessantly repeated. We might go farther if it were necessary, and say that there are certain ideas of such a nature that language can recal them to a mind by which they have been previously conceived, without being able to introduce them to another mind from which they were absent. Such, for example, is the idea of the infinite. The French language, to express infinity, employs a materialist word, if we may be permitted to speak thus; it gives a negative signification to the term which, of all others, conveys the most positive of all ideas. It is totally different in the Greek. But, in reality, what imports the sign? Nothing finite can embody a complete notion of the infinite. Neither the tongue, nor the senses, nor the conscience, nor any effect of abstraction or generalisation, having for its base the data of the senses or of conscience, can form a full idea of the infinite, or of perfect and eternal existence.

We might strengthen this answer by a vast number of observations which demonstrate the independent existence of the mind or soul, and the servitude imposed upon it by the vicinity of the body. For instance, it is certain that we employ language profitably to assist thought; but all quick minds have felt a thousand times, that the thought has preceded the expression. We often give the idea more precision by words, but we almost always diminish its animation and intensity. There are unquestionably chosen minds whose value remains for ever unknown, because the faculty of expression is denied to them. We sometimes see these minds overflowing with ideas, overlooked by the mass of mankind, and treated as inferior beings almost void of intelligence, although others of more penetration occasionally discover in their language, strokes and flashes of incomparable brilliancy. When thinking of them, we ask ourselves whether we are not in presence of a Genius reduced by enchantment to a condition which prevents him from shining forth in his true power and splendour. Sensibility, above all other feelings, being less susceptible of analysis, loses more by verbal expression that it can possibly gain. Of all the mediums that we employ, language properly so called, that is to say, articulated speech, is the least adapted to the expression of sentiment. Music is far more valuable, more

synthetic, more spontaneous, and totally void of abstraction. It is so evident that language is not an additional strength, but a fortunate and influential palliation of our weakness, that the man of genius requires only a single expression, where the common mind requires an absolute flow of words. We may venture here to appeal to enthusiasm, not as a means of discovering the truth, nor to control the data of reason; for enthusiasm, thus understood, is a mistake, and the cause of additional error. But enthusiasm is an actual and regularly established fact, exercising an important share in the occurrences of life, and without becoming, as certain mystics pretend, the sovereign of science, is at least, its reward and crown. Enthusiasm flies from words. Thought embraces a wider extent, sees further, and enjoys its own resources more perfectly, in a state of ecstasy, and without the help of speech. It may employ speech as it does music. We can conceive that the last effort of thought may be to sum up all laws in one single law, and consequently to render the development, that is, the exposition by words, useless. In God, the full perfection of thought renders the thought unique and expresses itself in a single word. There will be no speech required in heaven, for all things will there be thoroughly understood.

But we are not here called upon to maintain a theory in form against materialism: it suffices to have pointed out in a few sentences the weakness of the arguments by which that doctrine is supported. We feel happy in being assured of the fact that, amongst all reflecting minds, it loses ground daily, and the immense majority of philosophical schools frankly acknowledge spiritualism. We repeat, that, as soon as we become thoroughly convinced of the immateriality of the soul, we have made a great step towards the demonstration of immortality. In fact, what will henceforth be difficult to explain is, not that the soul can exist without the body, but how it has been able to live under that encumbering mass and within that gross envelopment. The separation becomes not only possible, but extremely probable, and we cannot comprehend why the tenant of the prison should perish because the dungeon is thrown down. We may, therefore, console ourselves with these agreeable anticipations from the moment when we touch upon the question of the immortality of the soul. We are not here dealing with one abstruse point of doctrine difficult to believe. On the contrary, all probability is in its favour before we enter on the investigation. After having so long endured the

exigences of the body, its wants, its pleasures, and its pains, the liberated soul sees and feels its own direct independence; it is no longer confined within a narrow horizon; it is no longer subject to external faults and vices, and the companion who diverted it from the good and the beautiful to attach it to an inferior nature, and to bind it to the earth, has disappeared for ever.

Sometimes an argument is employed to establish the immortality of the soul, the value of which ought not to be exaggerated. It is that drawn from indivisibility, and which may be stated thus: It is certain that the soul is indivisible, and this indivisibility, which the examination of our own consciousness directly establishes, is also one of the proofs which are brought forward in opposition to the materialists. Now, since the question is, to ascertain whether the indivisible soul is liable to perish, we must first inquire what is death? Is it the annihilation of our indivisible being, or the dispersion of the different parts of which a divisible being is composed? It is certain that death is only dissolution. The most ordinary expression proves this fact, which science confirms. Why then can we suppose that the soul must perish? Because every thing perishes. But if every thing perishes by dissolution, and the soul is indivisible, and consequently indissoluble, the soul cannot perish. It is, therefore, immortal by the very necessity and condition of its nature.

This is a very powerful argument: but it is true that death is dissolution, and nothing more; and it is equally true that unbelievers verge on folly when they say, "All compounded existences dissolve, without any of their component parts being annihilated; therefore, the soul, which is simple, indivisible, and insoluble, will be annihilated." We have solid ground for maintaining against them, that the annihilation of the soul is an unfounded and utterly incongruous supposition: only, we must not go so far as to assert that it is impossible. Assuredly it is not impossible for God to give back to nonentity that which he has taken from it.* The pantheists who deny creation, are welcome also to deny the possibility of annihilation. This is consistent as regards their doctrine. The argument we are now discussing, will be invincible with every pantheist who believes in the immateriality of the soul. With us it amounts only to a very strong

* "As God has issued the decree of creation within the existence of time, so also he could and can desire that the world should cease to be at any given time."—*Malebranche, Seventh Discourse on Metaphysics*, § 9.

probability, but does not of itself embrace certain and complete demonstration.

It has besides another objection: it establishes the immortality of the substance, without guaranteeing that of the person. My individual substance may be perpetuated under such modifications that this very perpetuation might become indifferent to me. Thus, I might lose the faculty of remembrance, which alone would suffice to render immortality useless. Two beings who live one after the other, or a single being which has no consciousness of its identity during the entire period of its existence, amount to the same thing, as far as I am concerned. This fact is simple and evident; nevertheless we shall see that it is frequently misunderstood. Thus, the indissolubility of my being places me immediately above companionship or equality, without however assuring me of immortality. So long as I placed my soul in the same rank with the body, I was bound to believe that it might dissolve, since all compound matter is condemned to dissolution. But now, when I am better instructed on the nature of spiritual substances, I confess that it requires nothing less than an effort of omnipotence to produce my annihilation; for no established law can reach me. It seems as if the annihilation of a simple substance formed an exception to the general laws of the world; and assuredly it is not less difficult to destroy than to create this simple substance. Nevertheless, this furnishes no reason why I should not perish with my body, if God so willed, and had a reason for his will.

But why should he desire this? He has created me; was it his object in that act of creation, that I should pass through life to arrive at death? I see around me many beings whose existence is much shorter than my terrestrial existence, and which disappear without leaving any traces; but these are only occasional or secondary beings, created for the whole, and not for themselves. As they do not know themselves, they cannot be a centre of action. My condition is very different. Not only is my material body incomparably superior, but I possess a consciousness of what I am; I feel, as I may say, my life, I love and I desire it. The thought of annihilation fills me with horror. Even in the uncertain future under which it conceals itself, death is the torment of my imagination. Must I believe that God has endowed me with this light, this love, this fear, merely for his own amusement? that it has pleased him to attach me so closely to the life which he has only bestowed on me for a moment

of time? to condemn me to this death which overwhelms my thoughts? In the midst of all these sleeping beings, why has he awakened me, merely that I may become a ready prey to annihilation? Can this be a wise God, who has only made me so great that I may become equally miserable? I may live to-morrow, since I live to-day. I am no obstacle in the way of God. He has bestowed my existence on me gratuitously; but this received benefit confers on me also a claim, for I know that God is just.

When this argument is used in presence of an unbeliever, he hesitates not to reply, that we acknowledge a future life solely because we desire it. But this desire is not produced by any individual feeling; it is common to all mankind, it forms a portion of our being, it is God who has implanted it in our bosoms. We have, therefore, the right of asking whether God has made us, at the same time, to love and to lose life? We collect together all these probabilities, without deceiving ourselves as to their value, and without passing them over as of little import. Unquestionably we form many desires which will never be accomplished; but a mere personal wish is very different from an innate conviction of human nature.

God does nothing without a specific object. Not only does every created being contribute to the general harmony of the universe, but all are fitted for a particular purpose, and endowed with the power and aptitude that they require. To want or to lose strength are two distinct signs of impotence. We ourselves, in our humble sphere of action, scarcely know whom we despise most; he who attempts an enterprise beyond his reach, or he who wastes enormous efforts to attain an object that lies under his hand. If France determines to make war on Russia, she assembles an army of three hundred thousand men; and this is well. But what would be said of a government that levied three hundred thousand men to take a village? Not only is it an error in judgment to waste unnecessary strength, but it is the most certain method of insuring failure. The skilful artificer proportions the force employed to the resistance to be overcome. If we apply these principles to the author of all things, we shall be compelled to acknowledge that his supreme will has regulated beforehand the faculties of every created being, according to the destiny he has assigned to him; and the glorious spectacle of universal creation confirms this opinion, wherever and in whatever direction we turn our eyes and thoughts towards it. We see and feel that the study of the human faculties teaches us the

futurity of man. A being destined to live eternally in heaven, and a perishable atom condemned to vegetate forty years upon earth, can never have been formed after the same model, if God is great, just, and omniscient. Let us begin at this point; and since we require to prove whether man is immortal, let us ask the question of man himself.

The heart should be examined, in the first place. Life ought not to be looked upon, as is too often the case, on the external surface. We must penetrate deeper, and the heart is the foundation of life. We know and understand little of the lives of others; and many men, through want of penetration or observation, are totally unacquainted with their own; they can scarcely estimate or distinguish the causes of their joy or grief, or the motives of their actions. They resemble those historians who accumulate a series of events, who relate battles and revolutions, but who never say a word on the state of minds and souls. As soon as we begin to be conscious of sensation, we also begin to love and sometimes to hate. This love may either concentrate in ourselves or seek an object from without. Almost without exception, it attaches itself to another being; to a father, a wife, a child, or a friend. In certain dispositions love surrenders itself up to the controlling influence of glory, vanity, or fortune. Sometimes, also, we love our native country, art, or human nature. If the love exceeds the ordinary measure, it assumes the common name of passion; but even the least impassioned temperaments are agitated and influenced by love. Who bestows on us this love? The object of our preference? Assuredly not—the object is only the pretext. That which is amiable to me, may be amiable to me alone. A loveable object does not of necessity create a loving heart; but where a heart is disposed to love, love will spring up, even though the object should happen to be unworthy. The lover finds in his own heart the perfections with which he adorns the object of his selection. Nothing can more completely demonstrate that we are something of ourselves, and do not entirely depend on our senses and on the world. Beethoven, after he became deaf, composed sublime music. What a world of enchantment displayed its splendours to the imagination of blind Milton! If I were disposed to write a poem to embody love, I certainly should not select two perfect lovers. I should take one of those enthusiastic hearts, who give themselves up in spite of reason or reflection, without after-thought or reserve; who live and breathe but for the object loved; who worship it with

rapture; who lose all thought of themselves in tending to promote its happiness; to whom sacrifice is enjoyment, whom nothing can disenthral, who are faithful even after death, and still more, after disdain and treachery; and who lavish their treasures of pure affection upon a deformed body, a diseased mind, and an ungrateful heart. Such is love in its full intensity and sublime grandeur, a visible trace of the hand of God in the being of his creation. What becomes of this power if man perishes? Shall we reduce it to the state of a mere physical existence? Shall we confine it within the limits of human life, this immeasurable sentiment which dreams but of eternity? When turning aside all intervening veils, and ascending to the Creator through his works, love attaches itself directly to God, shall its ardent longings be frustrated? This love, so holy and so absorbing, must it be dissolved with the cold dissolution of death? How! will not God exhibit and vindicate himself? Shall what has appeared to be the truest and richest reality of life, transform itself into a snare and a punishment? Are insensible souls not disinherited? and is it true wisdom to preserve a powerless heart, and to pass insensibly through life, without passion or delight, as if man were by anticipation already a corpse?

But let us leave love, and consider intelligence. Placed by the side of the faculty which teaches us to know, to measure, and to appropriate the world to ourselves, is there nothing more in the recesses of the mind? Why are we led by an invincible attraction to seek God and fathom his nature? Why does science always direct itself to general results? Why does it elevate itself so loftily in man's consideration, that it loses something of its practical utility? Wherefore does the physical horizon appear to us as a prison? Whence proceed so many fortunate efforts to triumph over space? Why this passionate desire to study the past, and this constant anticipation of the future? We call ourselves mortal, and yet all our inquiries and thoughts tend towards the discovery of eternal and universal laws. Our intelligence is nourished and fed by eternity alone, and are we then to believe that eternity will escape from us? Has God expressly created man to struggle against time and to be crushed by his antagonist? Not so: if the field of science is so extensive that an entire life passed in study without interval, can only obtain a glimpse of its dimensions; if in proportion as we achieve a triumph, a new power develops itself within us, which urges us on with increasing energy; if, notwithstanding so many ages

exhausted, so much brilliant genius employed, and so many great discoveries accomplished, the little that we know seems only to teach us the immensity of what still remains unknown;—can we refuse ourselves the consolation that, when these walls of flesh and blood are beaten down, the soul will see, comprehend, and enjoy in full possession, what in this world we only dream of and imagine? The materialists may say what they please, but their system suffocates us. They resemble prisoners who try to make us believe that the dungeon in which we groan together, will never be opened. We, who are spiritualists, adopt the doctrine of hope, liberty, and faith! In us, love is truth; the thought of the Eternal is truth. Every sentiment which directs itself towards God, every reflection that reveals a more exalted law, elevates us in effect towards the Almighty, not metaphorically or transitorily, but in actual reality. We employ this life in endeavouring to make ourselves worthy of the next. Thus we imbibe consolation and strength. Death and pain are deprived of their sting.

But neither the spirituality of the soul, which delivers us from the dissolution common to all bodies, nor the horror which nature has implanted in us of annihilation, nor the great faculties for which we find no adequate employment in this world, are sufficient to demonstrate the immortality of the soul, and we should be reduced to probabilities approaching certainty, if there were no such thing as evil.

God exists; he is good and all-powerful; he has created and governs the world. All these truths are instantly proved with impregnable force. Scepticism can find only one objection which carries any weight—the existence of evil. This reality impugns the power, or goodness, or justice of God. We have seen what can be said in reply. It is easy to explain physical evil; and even in man that portion of evil which is inevitably attached to his condition of a created, and, consequently, of an imperfect being. It would be absurd, as well as impious, to complain that he who has made us after his own image, has not made us equal to himself. But what is less comprehensible, is, that in bestowing on us all, with the same name and nature the same destiny, he has not also given the same means of reaching it. Here is one man rich and powerful, there is another poor; to this individual he has given expanded genius, to that a degree of intelligence scarcely superior to the instinct of animals; to each is distributed, in unequal measure, his allotment of happiness and misery; on one all pleasures and indulgences are liberally

conferred; from another every thing is taken by an arbitrary sentence—health, honour, wife, children, all that sustains, and all that brings consolation. The stoics reply that the chances of life are a lottery. To be rich or poor, young and beautiful or impotent and deformed, to rule or to serve, are of no more importance to us than it is to an actor whether he plays the part of *Orgon* or *Tartuffe*.* We are not allowed to select our own characters; our business is to perform them to the best of our abilities. If Epictetus is more perfect as a slave than Marcus Aurelius as an Emperor, Epictetus is more fortunate than Marcus Aurelius. To allow our happiness to depend upon others is to live the life of a beggar; to live like men we should conquer misery by despising it, and thus deprive the external world of its sting.† In giving us liberty, God has given us all; for it depends on ourselves to be virtuous, and the rest is unworthy of a thought. Such are, taken indiscriminately, a few of the maxims which the stoics oppose to counterbalance or disprove what is generally called evil. These lofty sentiments are full of truth and force, but the attire is not suited to every stature. To be satisfied with these conclusions we require to be either Epictetus or Cato. Can we believe that human nature can adopt them? and that firmly resolved to change feelings rather than condition, it can arrive at the sublime insanity of the stoics, which denies pain by dint of despising it? Let us venture to assert, without failing in respect to a sect which did honour to humanity, that there are misfortunes over which it is not salutary or right to triumph. We admire without reserve the broken leg of Epictetus; but we hesitate, suspended between horror and admiration, before the sentence of Brutus. We feel ourselves almost prepared to say with Bossuet that the philosophy of the stoics fancies itself great, because it is severe.‡ We can, and ought to know how to despise hunger, thirst, cold, and all other physical privations; but to hear our own child crying hopelessly for bread, to see him waste in the torments of starvation, to wander with him without shelter or refuge, to leave him dying to the care of God, to lower that

* "Take care to perform with diligence the part which the sovereign director of all things has imposed upon thee; make it short, if it be short; long, if it be long. If he has assigned to thee the character of a beggar, endeavour to represent it faithfully; be either a cripple, a prince, or a plebeian, as he has determined. Thy business is to play thy part, and his to select what that part shall be."—*Epictetus, Manual*, chap. xxiii.

† Non quid, sed quemadmodum feras, interest.—*Seneca, De Providentiâ*, chap. ii.

‡ Bossuet, *Sermon on Providence.*

beloved head, and feel that death will speedily leave an insensible corpse in our arms—or perhaps, which is a still more bitter agony, to struggle in vain against the overwhelming miseries of crime, to assist impotently in the destruction of a soul for which we would barter our own existence a thousand times—these are inflictions which all the high-sounding sentences of stoicism can neither attenuate nor cure, and the mere existence of which infallibly embraces one of these two consequences—either there is no God, or there is not a future life.

This inequality in the assignment of good and evil, becomes a pressing argument, in a totally different point of view, when we see all the success in this world fall to the lot of the vicious, and all the misery overwhelm the just. Undoubtedly it is wrong to say, that the moral law would be powerless without the rewards and punishments which constitute its sanction. There is an innate character in virtue, which renders it all-powerful over upright minds; and we gratify ourselves with the persuasion that we should still cling to it, even with the prospect of enduring misery, rather than purchase happiness at the price of dishonour. But if virtue without happiness suffices for a few exalted souls, under these hard conditions will it satisfy human nature in the aggregate? Will it accord with the justice of God?

Let us not ascend to the majesty of God, but let us look on justice in itself, rather than in its source. We carry an impulse within ourselves, which while it urges us towards what is good and right, compels us by a fortunate necessity to acknowledge the existence of a future state: this feeling is conscience. We may argue upon the nature and origin of this conviction; the rationalists imagine that it exists in man by the sole will of the Creator, and develops itself spontaneously within him, as often as he forms a moral determination, or takes part in the development of moral liberty in one of his own species. But not to introduce here the question of innate ideas and the theory of reason, and to confine ourselves to a point that is not even disputed, all the world agree that we conceive inherently the idea of justice; and whether derived from education or nature, this idea in a regulated mind possesses such power, that we can neither reject it in theory, nor mistake its ascendancy in practice. Are we dealing with our individual acts? Virtue produces, according to the circumstances of the case, either remorse, or a species of gratifying and legitimate pride. Are we only spectators of the acts of others? We approve or disapprove with equal

certainty and precision. If a son strikes his father in my presence, is it possible that I can look upon this as an action of no importance? If I pronounce it criminal, is it spontaneously or after reflection? Does my mind require to weigh this opinion, to consider all the evil results that may happen to society from this defalcation of filial respect? Can I imagine a written law, which should pronounce illusive the respect that the son ought to feel and evince for his father? Do not all schools, without distinction of origin or class, agree that there is an eternal justice independent of human justice, and on which human justice is founded? Let us even endeavour to suppose that this law of justice, recognised by all men, results solely from their condition, and that if the nature of humanity were different, justice would cease to be justice: we cannot bring ourselves to imagine this. I feel convinced, upon the same ground of conviction, that justice commands a son to respect his father, and that an effect cannot exist without a cause. I am compelled to believe this, or I must renounce the assistance of my reason. If I circumscribe the range of this axiom, and say, "Justice is true as regards man, but cannot apply to a being of a different nature," I must at the same time retrench from all the other axioms I adopt what I cut off from this, and look upon my reason only in the light of a relative authority. I must say, for instance, "It is true, as regards man, that the whole is greater than one of its parts; but this does not apply to a being of a different nature." This would be, in reality, to embrace scepticism; for between relative truth and doubt there is but the substance of a hair. Thus, justice exists and exercises absolute power; not only as regards man, but as regards the world; it exists, without condition. All adopt this conclusion who are not blinded by a theory. It follows from hence that justice ought to be fulfilled; for it cannot exist to be violated; in like manner it follows, that it is impossible, if this axiom "there can be no effect without a cause," is correct, that there can exist any effect without a cause. Therefore if the practical and actual world exhibits evident injustice, and if the seal of death is set thereupon, so that no hope remains of reparation in this life, it follows of necessity that there must be a life to come. This conclusion has equal force with our belief in the principle of justice. Either we must say there is no such thing as justice, or that virtue is always rewarded; if not on earth, infallibly and incontestably in a future state.*

* "As truly as I exist, I desire to obey the dictates of conscience in all

No sooner does this thought take possession of the soul, than it gives us more strength to bear the ills of life than all the maxims that the stoics ever invented, for it shows us at the same time nothingness and promised futurity.* It is a false morality which attaches the prosperity of the world to virtue. It has nothing to do with it; neither virtue, nor perhaps genius, can command success. Virtue is so far from being profitable that it is seldom represented otherwise than suffering and oppressed. Vice has all the chances of life on its side. It is the virtue of Cato, and not Cæsar, that triumphs over Cato. Men admire success, nothing more; and the most ordinary endowments, when favoured by circumstances, become traces of genius in the estimation of inferior minds. Nothing overpowers us so much in acts as quantity and completion, which constitute a double incarnation of power. Reason protests in vain; we almost without exception bow before the result. Cato is scarcely remembered in the triumph of Cæsar. When this aspiring citizen, who was yet honest, was preparing to march against the Roman senate, and consequently against the republic and liberty, he halted on the banks of the Rubicon, divided perhaps between personal ambition and a sense of public duty. There was only the breadth of a narrow river between him and crime; but there was also only that insignificant barrier between him and true glory. No sooner had he passed it than the world and history became his inheritance.†

Flattery decrees to him the title of father of his country, which the populace hasten to consecrate by acclamations. Millions are bestowed upon him to feed his luxury and easy gifts. This money, which is not his own, and which he dispenses without

which it prescribes to me. May this determination henceforth be irrevocably fixed in my mind; may all my other determinations depend on this, and may this depend on no other: may it be the principle, the motive of all my actions. I know, it is true, in my capacity of a being endowed with reason, that I can only act on the condition of proposing to myself an end, of expecting a result: I know also, for this has been demonstrated to me, that this obedience to my conscience produces no fruit upon earth. But let not this restrain me. Rather than renounce this obedience, I prefer supposing that beyond this world there is an abode where it will necessarily bear its produce . . . . The cloud disperses, a new universe manifests itself to me, at the same moment when I discover a new agent through which to grasp it." —*Fichte, On the Destiny of Man*, p. 303, et seq.

* "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for their's is the kingdom of heaven."—St. Matthew, chap. v. verse 10.

† "Successful crime was just, and ceased to be a crime."—*Boileau*, satire x. Ed. Lachine, p. 114.

impoverishing himself, occasions his liberality to be applauded to the clouds. He establishes a rigorous policy to keep an empire in subjection. He encourages poets, who bestow fame in return. He enacts salutary laws, because nothing is difficult to absolute power. If a revolt springs up, he crushes it without leaving his palace; and posterity, as well as his contemporaries, add that achievement to his personal glory. Thus his life passes on in power and peace. A single trait of clemency, eulogised by Cicero in emphatic terms, causes the proscriptions to be forgotten. History overflows with examples which it would be impossible to explain, if all consummated and irreparable injustice were not evidences of a future life. Still we are only acquainted with the leading dramas of the world, for to make a subject historical it must interest the multitude or the powerful. An act of obscure injustice takes place without leaving traces behind. An axe falls, an assistant executioner effaces the marks of blood, and the babbling, busy crowd, pass over the yet lukewarm spot without thinking either of the scaffold or the victim; without asking whether he who has just been executed was called Malesherbes or Carrier. Thus a mischievous and false philosophy collects all these iniquities and miseries together to crush Providence under their weight. But we who are endowed with faith, and who cannot for a moment suspend our reliance on God, feel ourselves forced and constrained, in presence of an act of irreparable injustice, to believe and trust in the immortality of the soul.

CHAPTER II.

OF THE DESTINY OF THE SOUL AFTER DEATH.

"Let him then take confidence for his soul, who during his life has rejected the pleasures and advantages of the body, as being strangers and bringers of evil; also, he who has loved the enjoyments of science; who has adorned his soul, not with strange attire, but with that which properly belongs to it, such as temperance, justice, strength, liberty, and truth; he may tranquilly await the hour of his departure for the other world, as being prepared for the voyage when destiny shall call him to undertake it."—Plato's *Phædo*, translated by V. Cousin, t. i., p. 314.

After having demonstrated the immortality of the soul, there yet remains a task to be fulfilled—that of inquiring into the destiny that awaits man beyond the grave. Can we acquire no certain knowledge of this rapidly approaching future? and is the hope which ought to console and sustain us here below solely confined to an abstract idea? The same proofs which are used to establish the necessity of another existence give us the right of asserting that after undergoing the trial of life in this world, the sinful will be punished and the good rewarded. These words punishment and recompense are insufficient to satisfy human curiosity; they scarcely suffice to act upon our sensibility, and to intervene with full efficacy in our meditations. This forms one of the ordinary complaints of the ignorant multitude against philosophy. The mere demonstration of the immortality of the soul is held as nothing, unless we can describe from point to point, the unknown regions towards which time, in its course, is carrying us. It is to furnish a reply to this precise demand for particulars, that since, and, we might almost say, even before the origin of philosophy, the dogma of the metempsychosis has been invented. This dogma is intended to solve two problems at the same time—inequality in this world, and rewards and punishments hereafter.

When the springs of life are exhausted, and the body sinks in decay, the soul which then escapes from its temporary prison passes into another body and commences a new career. Such is the dogma of the metempsychosis under its simplest form. If under the first trial this soul has well employed its liberty, it obtains as its portion in a second life, a better organised body

and a happier destiny. If, on the contrary, it has abused the gifts of Providence, its condition will suffer in the following trial, and it will descend some steps in the ladder of hierarchy. Thus we decide our own fate entirely, and that which appears a mere accident of birth, is already, in fact, a recompense or a chastisement.

This doctrine has occupied a conspicuous position in history. Suffice it to say that we find it in Greece in the school of Pythagoras, in Egypt, in India, in China; and that it has been revived at intervals, in modern times, by philosophers, who from the brilliancy of their style and the richness of their imagination, might, at the same time, be designated poets.

Before the accession of these last disciples, the metempsychosis could scarcely be considered anything beyond a legend, since, placing the theatre of our physical changes in this lower world, it made us revive under different bodies, in the midst of our familiar circle of relatives and friends. Plato speaks of the doctrine with a smile upon his lips, more like a sage who amuses himself, than as a philosopher who instructs. He conducts us to an extensive plain where the souls of the departed are called together to select a new condition. Free choice is left to them, but each brings to the grand consideration their individual tastes, passions, or inexperience. Plato exhibits to us Atalanta changed into a wrestler, Epeus, the son of Panopeus (the fabricator of the wooden horse at the siege of Troy), as a workwoman, Agamemnon transformed into an eagle, Ajax as a lion, and Thersites banished into the body of an ape. As soon as the allotment is completed, the judges of the souls carry them to the waters of Lethe, where they lose all recollection of their former state.* This is the common rule of all analogous theories; but if by this the hypothesis is rendered possible, it becomes at the same time useless. When the soul by changing the body ceases to remember, the punishment is no longer a punishment but an act of cruelty; even the recompense becomes a gift of generosity without motive. The error of the metempsychosis, thus understood, resembles that of the legislators who punish the crime of the father upon the children and grandchildren. This doctrine, which transforms misery and vice into punishment, naturally flourished in Egypt where the distinction of castes was consecrated; but it has disappeared, with ancient slavery, before the march of universal fraternity.

* Plato, *Republic*, b. x. translated by V. Cousin, vol. x. p. 292.

To preserve consistency between the dogma of the transmigration of souls and the principle of merit and demerit, we must suppose, in accordance with some schools,* that instead of passing after this life into the body of another terrestrial animal, our souls, without losing the consciousness of their identity, are removed to another planet to animate there bodies of a different species. On this condition, the second existence might become either the reward or punishment of the first, and nothing interferes with the supposition that this second trial being followed by several others, the soul may fall still lower and lower, or rise in a similar proportion, until the course of trial is complete and the series of transformations arrested. Nothing can be more poetical than this idea, which carries us from star to star. The imagination may exercise full play, and suppose that in each successive planet there are placed bodies endowed with the most miraculous attributes, and seconded by the most perfect organs; with forms of society containing institutions which leave far behind them in excellence and purity the most ingenious of human inventions. In such an hypothesis, man may truly believe himself the monarch of creation. Instead of being for ever bound to this terrestrial sphere, which is but an atom, the starry heaven becomes his residence. When the evening sun sets in the horizon, and in the midst of the silence of nature we behold through a soft and tranquil light those golden studs which sparkle in the clear blue firmament, we may ask ourselves which is the region we shall first inhabit, after having put off the mortal covering which now envelops us; where and in what planet dwell in power and liberty those whose loss we have bewailed, whose ashes we preserve in the tomb, and who from the heaven to which they have ascended, look down in pity upon our ignorance and suffering :

Sub pedibusque vident nubes et sidera.

Unfortunately, it is not enough that an hypothesis should be brilliant and seductive to the imagination; if we cannot establish it on substantial evidence, it remains only an enchanting dream, and can never be admitted into the records of science. It is not correct to say that our souls had a previous being before they inhabited the bodies in which they are at this moment confined;

* "Integer ille, nihilque in terris relinquens, fugit, et totus excepit; paulumque supra nos commoratus dum expurgatus et inhærentia vitia situmque omnis mortalis ævi excutit, deinde ad excelsa sublatus, inter felices currit animas."—*Seneca, De Consolatione.*

that this anterior existence is indispensable to explain the inequality of our faculties and fortunes; and that if the present actual life has been preceded by one or more of a different character, we can thus only consider it as an intermediate link in a chain of transformations. This would be returning to the ancient doctrine of the metempsychosis, or rather to the change without memory, sense of identity, or justice. It is most unquestionably true that the sum of good and evil is unequally distributed to men, and that it is extremely difficult to reconcile this disproportioned division with the justice of God; but it would be still more difficult, or rather absolutely impossible, to admit that God is capable of punishing us in this life for crimes of which we have lost all recollection. There can be no mutual connection or responsibility between our actual lives and those anterior existences of which we retain not the smallest trace or impression. In this invincible ignorance in which I find myself as to any former condition or earlier crimes, I cannot submit to a prescribed punishment and receive it as lawful. He who thus exercises authority is a tyrant and not a father. It is because the punishment cannot be separated from the fault committed that I feel assured of rising again with a full and entire consciousness of my identity. If we abandon this principle, the evidence of which is no longer disputed in the application of human justice, we must then admit that the life to come will be, like preceding existences, separated from this by impassable chasms, and that the promised immortality applies to the substance only and not to the individual. These, the two most important dogmas of moral philosophy, perish together; for, on the one hand, the principle of merit and demerit is vitiated; and, on the other, immortality without consciousness or memory becomes useless and indifferent.

Finally, if we must make this addition, the doctrine which transforms the good and evil of actual life into rewards and punishments, destroys the sources of charity, for it changes the unfortunate into the guilty. The principle, therefore, of anterior existences is false and out of date. It might have inveigled some minds two thousand years ago, but the modern Pythagoreans are imperatively called upon to renounce it, out of respect to their conception of justice.

Another evidence in favour of the metempsychosis has been drawn from the shortness of human life. So brief a trial, they say, could not be decisive; it is too little to satisfy divine justice. But what do they call the brevity of the trial? To what do they

compare it? If to eternity, such a comparison is too absurd to hold ground. Mortal existence may be lengthened an hundredfold without in the slightest degree changing its relation to eternity.* Thus the trial may be complete in a short life. We acknowledge readily that the conditions of the trial are not equally imposed on all men; but how can we apply this fact to the life to come, unless by supposing that God will keep an exact and scrupulous account of every human transaction? We know that every one will be punished or rewarded according to his deeds. The inequality of the trial will be compensated by the inequality of the punishment or reward. We may safely affirm this, for it springs from the idea of justice; the rest is mere conjecture without proof or probability.

But why, we are asked, cannot the guilty in undergoing punishment satisfy divine justice by repentance, and thus obtain a more complete and immediate pardon? And what prevents us from supposing, if this period of punishment becomes also a second trial, that the just may evince higher merit, and thus establish a claim to a superior reward? Our answer is ready and direct. The question demanded is, whether it is impossible for the guilty pending the duration of punishment to merit pardon? No, this does not appear impossible. Do we pretend to say that it will happen? On such a subject no one can speak with certainty. Beyond the proportionality of punishment everything is conjectural. What, then, is this theory of the metempsychosis if not a conjecture founded upon conjectures? We may add that it is not correct to assume, that if the sinner can obtain a mitigation of his punishment, it follows that the just man can also win an addition to his happiness. It is vain to attempt a parallel between punishment and reward, for justice may be tempered by mercy, without conferring on the good any right to a higher degree of blessedness.

We are told, and truly, that in accordance with the principles on which the belief in the immortality of the soul is founded, man may return to life entire, and find himself in another world with his former intelligence, affections, and liberty. If (it is said,) he is free after this passing existence, he ought to be able to exercise freedom on the usual conditions of liberty, that is to say, with the chances of merit and demerit; he is still in a state

* "Undecumque ex æquo ad cœlum erigitur acies, paribus intervallis omnia divina ab omnibus humanis distant."—*Seneca, De Consolatione*, chap. ix.

of trial, and has still to hope and fear. The argument turns upon this point, that action must necessarily be, everywhere and in all beings, exactly what it is here below. Who can prove this? Who can even prove that action, limited, varied, and divided action, must be indispensable to liberty? Because man cannot be a free agent except on the condition of possible error, does it therefore follow that liberty in its absolute essence implies the inevitable possibility of error? To maintain such a doctrine, we must either affirm that God can do wrong, or that he is not free. If it is evident that liberty and infallibility belong equally to the Divine nature, it results thence that the possibility of error is not comprised in the essence of liberty. What solidity or weight can we then find in these accumulated proofs which rest upon false or conjectural data?

Finally, an attempt is made to persuade us that we could not enjoy perfect happiness in heaven, unless we had, as in this world, an appointed task to fulfil; and hence a conclusion is drawn that the life that awaits us, like that through which we are passing, is again a state of transition. To love God, they say, and to know God, constitute two elements of bliss, but not bliss total and entire. We must still endeavour to tend towards the divine ideal of perfection by effort and action. Thus, all the conditions of the question are overthrown. Hitherto, men complained of the harshness and fatigue of the trial, and philosophy replied: it is necessary to merit repose by labour; but here is a new doctrine which loves labour for itself alone, which rewards us for a triumph by the promise of a new effort to be attempted, and which transforms eternal life into eternal motion. Is it not rash to settle the conditions of a state of happiness which we can neither taste nor imagine in our present condition? And is it possible to establish a system upon an idea so hazarded? Action is undoubtedly included in the essence of perfection, but is action inconsistent with or contrary to repose? The God of Aristotle is at the same time essentially immutable and active: all metaphysics acknowledge a fixed and immovable cause. Let us admit, although it is not proved, that action and repose cannot be reconciled except in the nature of God; because varied, multiplied, and limited action is necessary to our happiness in the present life, there is no ground for concluding therefore that it continues to be equally necessary in the life to come. Action is of importance to our happiness here, because human life is a state of trial; and it will also be of importance in the life to

come, if that life is in itself only another state of trial; but it is precisely upon this point that the whole question turns.

It results, therefore, that the doctrine of the metempsychosis is nothing more than a poetical supposition. This hypothesis, intended to clear up the mystery of a future state, and to give, as is assumed, a specific embodiment to our hopes, is certainly more vague than the simple promise of a reward to which philosophy in general confines itself. In fact, is it implied that this successive ascent from star to star, of which, according to this theory, our future consists, is to be prolonged to infinity? If so, the hypothesis becomes an empty abstraction—a series of transformations, not one of which is known to us, an eternal voyage towards a goal which has no existence. If, on the contrary, we are answered that the soul, after several consecutive migrations, finally loses itself in the bosom of God, why not rather become pantheists at once? Why take so long a voyage to be swallowed up in this gulf at last? Shall we not rather say to these poets of the invisible world, as the courtier of Pyrrhus said to his master, "Repose from the first day?"

Having given up the doctrine of the metempsychosis, we must now return to the inquiry of what philosophy allows us to affirm with certainty. We have seen that there are meritorious rewards for the virtuous, and penalties for the wicked; we may add with equal confidence, that the soul does not lose the consciousness of what it has been; this is an indispensable condition of future reward or punishment. Thus, we may hold as definitively proved these two points: the preservation of the individual person, and reward or punishment according to desert. It is sometimes profitable to dwell on assertions that appear indisputable. The advice comes from Leibnitz. The same facts may assume different aspects according to the side from which they are reached. When we are dealing with an important principle, we are bound to examine it carefully, to be quite satisfied that we should recognise it through another and less direct channel. Is it positively necessary that the soul should preserve the memory of what it has been that it may be capable of receiving reward or punishment? Let us thoroughly comprehend this idea of reward and punishment. Punishment is a grief or pain inflicted on the author of a culpable act; reward is a satisfaction or return conferred upon the author of a meritorious act. In this lower world, in the distribution of human justice, does it ever happen that John is punished for the fault of Paul? Assuredly this does happen, when we are deceived as to

the facts; but, if we are able to distinguish the guilty, it is he, and he alone, that we desire to punish. Formerly, before the progress of philosophy, there existed a mutual responsibility between all the members of a family; and because, in certain cases, the recompense accorded to the father descended to his remote posterity, it was thence concluded that society could perpetuate the punishment as it had extended the reward, This was to confound two very opposite ideas; for a benefit may be gratuitous, while punishment, in its very essence, supposes the culpability of the sufferer.

If society, to reward the father more effectually, gratuitously extends a gift to his descendants, undoubtedly it has a full right to do so; but punishment is necessarily, absolutely, and rigorously of a personal character. It is so to such an extent, that if the criminal is not in full possession of his faculties when he commits the offence, society deems that its right of punishment is removed. It takes precautions against his again repeating his crime, shuts him up out of consideration for the general interest, but commences by acquitting him of the charge. The word criminal scarcely applies to him.* Further than this, if, after having committed the crime in full knowledge of his intention, and in perfect possession of his faculties, the accused is stricken with insanity before he appears in presence of the judges, it seems as if the law, enlightened by philosophy, feels that it is not entitled to inflict the appropriate punishment, and confines itself to depriving him of the power of committing future mischief. It is essential that the criminal should understand that he is punished; without this condition, justice changes its name, and becomes barbarism. Finally, let us add, the death of the accused puts an end to all proceedings.† During the dark ages, the dead were sometimes prosecuted. A very mitigated remnant of this custom is still to be found in a neighbouring nation. It may seem reasonable, provided that it is restrained within certain limits; for penalties have a double aim—to punish the criminal, and to check the crime. The criminal is no longer amenable, for he is dead; but the sentence may be pronounced for the sake of example. Nevertheless, the French law, founded upon philosophy, has wisely decided that the death of the accused terminates the indictment. It is most important to restrain evil natures,

* "There is neither fault nor crime if the accused was in a state of insanity when the act was committed."—*Penal Code* (*French*), Art. 64.

† Art. 2, *Code of Criminal Instruction.*

but it is even more essential to impress upon all minds the true character and object of punishment. Now, we cannot repeat too often, that justice may truly retain its name,—the guilty ought to be made to comprehend that he is punished.

This leads us to a few analogous reflections on reward. There is a great difference between a gift and a recompence. I may give to whom I please, when I please, and as much as I please. He to whom I give has no right to my benefactions. In giving, I exercise my own liberality; I perform an act of pure good-will. On the contrary, I can only reward merit, and he I reward has a distinct right to what I assign to him. I do honour to myself, without doubt, in rewarding generously, but simply because we honour ourselves in doing justice. These are elementary principles. It often happens that an institution destined to reward merit becomes an object of traffic with courtiers, and that favour replaces justice: this is because all human arrangements engender abuse: the distinction accorded to intrigue mocks the name of recompence. The appellation would change, if the truth were known, and would then become disgrace. If sometimes honours are hereditary, this is because there has been no other adequate method found of sufficiently acknowledging the services of the father; and in this case, the distinction accorded to the family is an additional reward conferred on their progenitor; as regards the son it is a favour, a benefit. In a word, the principle of merit and demerit and the idea of reward and punishment are necessarily inseparable. No one can be either punished or rewarded without having deserved either the one or the other, and also without the consciousness of having so deserved. This applies with truth even to the public funeral decreed by the state to a great hero. It gives him the glory, being no longer able to confer the happiness.

This character is not exclusively peculiar to the rewards and punishments distributed by human justice. We cannot admit that God will punish us in another life if we have not transgressed any of his laws; or that he will treat us after death as he will treat the virtuous, if we have violated our oaths, outraged divine majesty, and preferred personal interest to duty. This conviction adds to the weight of remorse, and mixes the dread of future punishment with the consciousness of degradation. We undoubtedly depreciate human nature too much if we believe that it is solely influenced by the fear of chastisement or the hope of recompense; but, without denying the strength of other motives,

these are amongst the most powerful; and he who has been in the habit of watching a death-bed will know that the thought of futurity mingles either joy or bitterness with the agony of the last sufferings. If at the moment when the expiring criminal is tormented with anxiety at the thought of the God who awaits him, he is told that future existence is a mere invention of philosophers and priests, it is possible that he may derive consolation from this hope of annihilation. But let us suppose that, instead of an atheist, a believer in the metempsychosis approaches him and says, "Your soul cannot perish; it will live, and it will live in misery; but you will know nothing of the matter. Your memory is about to cease, and your consciousness to be extinguished. A new life is on the point of commencing in your substance without any other community between you, beyond this identification of inert matter." What distinction will the dying man understand between these words and the promise of annihilation? Does he know what his substance will be when life is abstracted from it? He scarcely cares about his body, with which he is well acquainted; and he is supposed to feel regard for this substance which can neither be seen, nor touched, nor felt; and which, separated from the faculties it develops, is nothing more than a vain and incomprehensible abstraction! And what signifies to me a pain or infliction that I am not aware of? Can I endure grief without knowing it? Who will ever receive as serious, a threat joined to such metaphysical subtleties?

The same may be said of rewards. Let us remember Brutus arrived at the last moment of his existence. He dies vanquished, and seeing the triumph of Octavius Cæsar, cries aloud, "O virtue, thou art only a name!" This is a mere imprecation which escaped him hastily, and history has too eagerly preserved. This single sentence, if pronounced upon reflection, tarnishes a life of devotion and sacrifice to duty. It was worthy of the soul of Brutus to love virtue for itself without the hope of recompence. The virtue which requires a salary changes its name, and ought to be called worldly cleverness; even when the prospect of payment is remote, such virtue is little more than a protracted negotiation. If the masters and martyrs of stoicism could have issued from the grave and been present at the expiring moments of Brutus; if they had stood in his tent, one habited as a slave, another carrying the instruments of torture by which he had been mangled, they would have denied this false disciple, who believed that he had lost his game because fortune ranged herself on the

side of vice. Was it thus to estimate virtue that he had embraced the stoical philosophy? Had Zeno promised to him riches and dominion? When virtue appeared to Brutus attended by ruin and defeat, it was then that he was called upon to worship her. By these august accompaniments she was to be recognised. His dying words were unworthy of his life.

A Brutus might be required to love virtue for herself. Such an effort could not be expected from vulgar minds. Future rewards supply a powerful incentive for which we ought to thank the bounty of God. Man requires this hope to nerve him for life and death. What intelligent and sympathetic soul does not feel and encounter martyrdoms within itself? The most to be lamented are not the martyrs who die heroically and whose history commands our tears. There are calamities less visible, daily sufferings, deceptions perpetually recurring, friendships betrayed, affections repulsed, injuries sustained, shame and nameless tortures which endure for sixty years, and fail even to obtain the last of human consolations, pity!

When a life has thus been dragged on from suffering to suffering even until death, what recompence has God in store? Annihilation? He who has witnessed the struggle and the inward victory, who knows the devotion to duty, and who has estimated the price at which it has been achieved, when for sixty years he has refused to this wounded spirit a single enjoyment, a respite, a glimmer of light through the darkness, has he nothing to say in consolation, at the moment when exhausted strength can endure pain no longer, now when the worn-out body is ready to resolve itself into dust? In that moment, religion watches over the bed of death, and murmurs in the ear of the dying sinner the glorious promise of immortality. He has suffered hunger and thirst, he has loved without being even understood, he has invented great works which have been rejected with contempt, the world has refused to acknowledge either his genius or his heart. Tell him then of a father who is waiting for him beyond the grave, of a father who has tried, but now rewards, and is ready to receive him, worn with his long pilgrimage, broken, tortured and exhausted in strength, but ready to be born again for a new and eternal life. Here are words which will make him smile in the midst of all his agonies. Here is a just idea, and faithful promises; the true pillow on which to repose in the last sleep of life.

But to disappear in God is really to die. To lose all con-

sciousness of identity, even in preserving substance, is, in fact, annihilation. It may be said that the high sounding phrase, "to be absorbed in the bosom of God," is merely a metaphor, and one which closely examined involves a contradiction and an absurdity. Can a finite being become so blended with infinity, that the two existences together form but one? Is such an union and identification possible even in this the sphere of created beings? Is it possible that this return into the bosom of God of one of his creatures can add anything to the Divine existence? And if it adds nothing, what difference is there between this absorption and annihilation? If God is the only substance, no particle of me can endure after my consciousness is extinguished. If created beings possess identical substance, what can be more monstrous than the supposition that these contingent substances ever become absorbed in absolute substance; and what more inconsistent than to call this death immortality, or to propose such an annihilation of heart and thought as a recompence? Pantheism may here be found, at the end, as we have already discovered it at the beginning of such philosophy, and equally devoid of proof, equally contradictory and cruel. Yes—it is in truth a cruel doctrine which questions at the same time the present and the future, which reduces this world to a dream instead of a reality, and destroys man as soon as he awakens.

The immortality on which we rest our faith is not then the illusive perpetuation of substance which renders immortality useless, and reward or punishment impossible, and which is founded on nonsense and contradiction. It is, on the contrary, the immortality of all that constitutes man, of his heart and mind; in a word, the immortality of the individual being. At the appointed time death casts his shadow over us, the world disappears, and we find ourselves, whole and identical, beyond the grave. What in this new world will be the punishment of the guilty? and what the occupation of the just? This question is incessantly repeated, and philosophy is depreciated for not being able to find a reply. It seems, sometimes, as if philosophy were considered unavailing and worthless, because it fails to describe exactly the state of the human soul after death. We forget that it belongs to the necessities and conditions of human nature to be unable to comprehend or describe anything beyond the lower world. It is much that God has permitted us to affirm and

prove invisible reality. Even though we knew nothing of God, beyond that he exists, or of futurity, beyond that it is certain, we ought to consider ourselves happy, and value these two assurances beyond all others. But we may go farther, although in a very humble degree.

Let us lay aside altogether what concerns the specific punishment of the guilty. They will be punished. This is all that we are interested in, for this alone is necessary to the justification of Providence; the nature of the punishment is of secondary importance.* We know that it will be proportioned to the crime, for the judge is infallible. But we have no occasion here to discuss matters unconnected with philosophy, and even in the order of speculations, inaccessible to human intelligence: let us separate those which apply to punishment, and confine ourselves to the happiness of the just.

As we shall certainly rise again in our complete identity, the souls of the just will preserve after death their three essential faculties, sensibility, intelligence, and will. But as they will be delivered from the thraldom of the body, and the period of trial will have terminated, they will no longer have to sustain a struggle, and all their endowments will be applied directly to that object, without being distracted by the sufferings and wants of mortal existence.

Thus, our sensibility in this world is divided between the pure and elevated conceptions derived from the idea of God, and the more humble feelings which spring from our intercourse with the body, and from the necessity of preserving, and associating with material substance. But, with the majority of men, the body assumes such a predominance, that it almost entirely engrosses sensibility. As soon as the body awakens into life, images enter in profusion through the eyes; the ears are assailed by a thousand confused sounds, the sense of smell is attracted by innumerable odours; all other surrounding bodies press closely upon us, with allurements of pleasure and menaces of pain; within, hunger enforces its claims, and compels us to devote an hour each day to its alleviation; scarcely has hunger disappeared when the nourishment introduced into the stomach forces itself on our attention.

* In the absence of all religious authority upon the eternal duration of punishments and rewards, philosophy presents, at least, as an irrefutable conjecture, an unlimited hope to the good, a terrible doubt to the wicked.—*Thomas Henry Martin, On Future Life*, Part II. chap. vii. p. 294.

Then follow cold and heat, with the necessity of mechanical labour. In the midst of all this, what remains to impress on us the thought of eternity, or to lead us to feel the delights of divine love? Our time is entirely engrossed by the care of our mortal destiny. Thus the body controls and degrades us, and transforms us from masters, as we are by the superiority of our nature, to the condition of dependents and slaves. The same rule applies to our intelligence. Its object is truth; its destiny is to seek truth, its honour and greatness to know and appreciate truth: but when the mind directs its attention to the true and universal, the body compulsively draws off that attention, to obtain, in consequence of some degrading necessity, the nourishment it requires. Philosophy must give place to commerce. We strain our faculties to the utmost to reconcile the interest of Peter with that of Paul; we study plants, not to admire the wisdom of the Creator, but to discover whether they contain any nutritive substance. This encumbering and exacting body requires much; it must have meat and drink, clothing, heat, shelter, and medicines. If all these are not furnished on demand, the body rebels and gives itself up to extremes of passion which terrify the soul. Even when the mind is able to concentrate itself so as to attend to its natural avocation, science, the body intrudes as an auxiliary. The mind can scarcely think without its aid. As soon as intelligence wishes to study God in his works, it must perforce trust to the evidence of eyes and ears. It suffers all the inconvenience arising from the limited proportions of the body, the horizon of which is necessarily narrow, and from the weakness and inaccuracy of the organs which the least exertion fatigues, which the slightest malady deranges, and which even in a natural state supply only information which we cannot control. In fine, our will becomes exhausted in some mechanical work, and generally devotes itself to subjects ill studied and examined. There are a great number of creatures made after the image of God, capable of feeling all the charms of poetry, and of comprehending the most lofty discoveries of science, who during an entire life are occupied from morning until night in sawing a beam lengthways, or in boring a hole through a mass of rough stone with an iron hammer. Of what use is their intelligence in this humble trade? It injures rather than helps them. An automaton, a mechanical figure, would do the same work more rapidly and with greater regularity. In actions which implicate moral feeling, the body invariably interferes with its passions,

and as invariably to incline us to the evil side. This is what may properly be called, interest. Self-interest renders us unjust, ungrateful, selfish, luxurious; attaches us to trifles, and wastes our energies in the accomplishment of actions without permanent result; actions which bring no strength to him who performs them, and add nothing to the perfection of the system of which we form a part.

Remove the body and everything is changed. All sensations of physical pain and pleasure disappear, and leave the soul free to indulge in the love of Him who is beauty in its very essence. We shall thenceforward never look for grace or attraction in terrestrial images; divine beauty exercises its full and direct influence upon us, that we may be filled with sweet and pure intoxication. Our intelligence is no longer assailed by the impressions of the senses which prevented it from discovering its own nature and resources, or from studying God who is its star: it yields itself up entirely to the contemplation of absolute omnipotence. Here, in this world, the soul is too constantly diverted from its course to be enabled to apply entirely to the proper subject of knowledge, eternal truth; it is necessary that it should banish from thought, by an energetic effort, all the images and noisy excitements of this world; that it should examine facts, not to become acquainted with them, but to penetrate the laws by which they are governed; that it should enter, by a full conception of these laws, into the sphere of invisible realities, which are of all realities the most solid; that, having once mastered these laws, it should compare them with each other, observe their analogies, and condense them into a superior law, of which they are only transformations; that it should ascend thus, by logical degrees from these multiplied and varied phenomena, to the all-powerful unity which encloses the universe in a single system; and, finally, that springing upwards from the corruption of the world to the idea of the Creator, it should obtain a glimpse, through the dazzling clouds by which it is concealed, of the eternal and immutable essence which has originated all existence and all truth. Arrived thus, by dint of perseverance, at the summit of knowledge, the spirit grapples, in a rapid moment, all the realities of which it has dreamed before; it forgets infirmity and misery in the full possession of that which is, by pre-eminence, the object of thought; it seems as if time and space had vanished, and the eternal had manifested himself in all his glory. Then everything becomes confused and effaced; the heart calms down, science

once more takes possession of us with its inexorable rigour, the expansive dream leaves us only a recollection, and we recommence labour and research in the hope of enjoying a second ecstacy. This moment, which has passed with the rapidity of lightning, has given us a foretaste of celestial happiness.* "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain."† The human heart, which has hitherto loved so much, and so many various unworthy and frail objects, will now devote its affection exclusively to God; and the mind, so much bewildered, so often led astray, divested of all doubt and chimera, will think of God alone; and our love and intelligence having found the object which properly belongs to them, and possessing it fully and directly, will fill us with all the happiness that the nature of a finite being can receive and enjoy. The divorce which in this world so often takes place between reason and desire will cease, because we shall be absorbed entirely in a single idea and a single love. Our liberty will be the more complete, as we shall no longer recognise the strife of conflicting passions. Our entire being, tranquillised and reconciled to itself, will extend all its strength towards absolute Perfection, which is at once the true, the beautiful, and the good—the triple and only ideal of perfection, towards which, since the world began, our hearts, intelligences, and desires aspire. Such is the future which philosophy can promise to man, and founded on infallible inductions. In the face of this definite conclusion, we no longer understand those who reproach philosophy with the barren nature of its promises. It may be said that these objectors cannot think or imagine without including in their conceptions the body and its necessities. Our ideal doctrines appear to them vague and uncertain, solely because they are ideal; and for this same reason we consider them precise and clearly defined. We sum up our expectations in the words of Bossuet: "In what will the future life consist? In serving God eternally, such as he truly is, and in loving him for ever without the fear of losing him."‡

Let me collect myself for a moment before I terminate these

* "God possesses perfect happiness, which we can only enjoy for a moment. He possesses it always, which to us is impossible. To enjoy, is with him to act; and this is why to watch, to think, and to feel, are the greatest enjoyments man can experience: to these may be added, as a natural consequence, to hope and remember."—*Aristotle, Metaphysics*, book xii. chap. 7.

† Revelations xxi. 4.

‡ Catechism of Meaux. *Second Part of the Christian Doctrine*, Lesson xi.

reflections on the life to come, for I am unwilling to dwell too long upon this all-important subject, or to surround myself with too much light. I return to thought, and ask how God can reward the soul after its separation from the body; and the more I reflect, the more I feel convinced that the entire system of morality demonstrates to me the future of man; and that it is not by any immediate rule of conduct that I can judge of the destiny that awaits me. Heaven may be found upon this earth, lightening up with its divine brilliancy the heart of every virtuous man. There is not an instant in which, from the miserable dust in which I crawl, I cannot raise myself to that lofty height, and claim possession in the name of intelligence and liberty.* All the passions which moral propriety condemns, all the thoughts and actions which it proscribes, have for their sole object the gratification of my appetites. All that moral propriety approves, and all that it commands, bring me back to God. It teaches me to love what is really beautiful, to seek what is eternally true, and to employ my liberty so as to illustrate by my actions the laws of justice. If the moral law is right, and we cannot doubt this without folly and blasphemy, what is happiness, if not the constant and willing accomplishment of all its ordinances? If the faculty of love that I acknowledge within me tends incessantly from this world towards God, who includes in his divine nature all that is good and beautiful; if my spirit is urged on by an invincible impulse towards the same omnipotent power, who is the source of existence and the sun of intelligence; if every act performed in opposition to justice is a degradation, a diminution of my being, while the fulfilment of duty elevates and strengthens me—it must then of necessity follow that once liberated from the body, I live thenceforward only to love God, to see him without a veil, and to unite myself without reserve to his will.† My spirit requires nothing beyond this certainty. It reposes more satisfactorily on this thought than in the hope of those progressive advances towards perfection, which postpone indefinitely the possession of the only good to which it aspires; or, than in the contemplation of those earthly pleasures which pagan

* Fichte, *On the Destiny of Man*, p. 309.

† "Eternal life commenced, consists in knowing by faith; eternal life consummated, consists in seeing face to face, and without veil. The knowledge that Christ here speaks of is a tender and affectionate knowledge, which leads to love. . . . . Free and perfect knowledge is a source of love."—*Bossuet, Meditations upon the Gospel, Second Part. Thirty-seventh Day.*

religions accumulate in their paradise. Who can tell whether this pretended necessity of rendering the idea of heaven more precise, is not the desire of making it more material? For all who know and understand the nature and degrees of intelligence and love, nothing is more clearly defined than these comprehensive and consoling words: "To see God face to face, and to love him with all our hearts, for ever and ever."

PART THE FOURTH.

WORSHIP.

CHAPTER I.

OF PRAYER.

"For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."—*St. Matthew*, chap. vii. verse 8.

"But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you."—*St. Luke*, chap. xii. verse 31.

We now approach one of the most important points of natural religion. There is an all-good and all-powerful God, who has created and governs the world. He has placed us here to undergo the trial of sorrow and sacrifice, and to prepare us for the happy and eternal life which we are destined to enjoy beyond the grave. These grand dogmas form the basis of natural religion: we know our origin, our rule of conduct, and our end. The God by whose omnipotent will we are created, has treated us like a father, since we are made immortal, and free, and at the same time endowed with love and intelligence. The period of trial we are doomed to undergo is necessarily mingled with bitterness; nevertheless we are not abandoned to our own strength. All things are so disposed, within and around us, that we are able to accomplish our allotted task, if we undertake it with a resolute desire. At the outset we know our contract with God, and we know also all that we require to be acquainted with, of his nature, to love and worship him. The gifts of affection and understanding are unequally dispensed; but these are only distinctions in the conditions of the trial to be endured: for we all possess, in the necessary degree, a knowledge of the law, and the means whereby

it is to be fulfilled. Herein lies the only point of real importance; for the duration of this life, compared with the eternity of the future, is not worthy of being taken into consideration. Finally, whatever doubt may be attached to the miserable events of the world, one thing we know to a certainty—the happiness that awaits us hereafter, if we are faithful. We have only thus to understand that it is our duty to bless the name of God, even in our afflictions.

In the act of worship we recognise a just homage rendered by the creature to his creator. Love and admiration, in common with all human feelings, are not always legitimate; but they cannot fail to be so, if their selected object is truly beautiful and amiable; and a well-regulated mind measures its attachment by the perfections of the being adored. To love and admire thus, is to walk in the right path, and to direct steadily the faculties of the mind and heart to a lawful end. Such sentiments increase instead of exhausting our strength. Deadness of soul, languor, and discouragement are unknown to those happy spirits who are attracted and retained by the truly good and beautiful. We may say of them, that they possess something above humanity, for they are gifted with the only earthly power which never exhausts itself, and the source of which augments as it flows. But how can any created being be amiable, except in proportion as he expresses less imperfectly than others the divine perfection? All that is good and lovely below God, can only be so by the indirect reflection of his complete beauty. He alone concentrates the essence of the true, the beautiful, and the perfect. To learn how to love him, above every other consideration, is the greatest happiness of which we are capable. All our affections must yield to this paramount feeling, which forms at once the source and consecration of every human sentiment.

There is yet another cause beyond the perfections of God which ought to incline our hearts to love him. He is our benefactor, our support, and our hope. We love the man who has snatched us from peril, and he who has instructed us in our duty; the mother who has nourished us with her milk, the father who has watched over us with vigilant anxiety, and who during one half of his life has laboured incessantly for our advantage. How ardently then ought we to love God, who has given us life itself, with all that renders life endurable and delightful? We ought to bless him for our creation, and for having gifted us with an intelligence capable of knowing and loving our creator. We

ought to adore him for the gift of freedom, and for having imposed on us the salutary yoke of duty. It is not only ungrateful but insane to acknowledge obligations to a fellow-creature, and to withhold them from the creator; for every advantage that we enjoy proceeds from him. It is he who by his will or by his laws, which express the human formula of his will, sustains and protects the life that he has bestowed on us. We breathe, we act, we think, under his guiding hand. We enjoy good through his bounty; we suffer evil by our own fault. He has so disposed all things from the beginning, that we everywhere find the remedy by the side of the mischief. He has not made us for this earth, but for an invisible world, the delights of which we are, as yet, incapable of comprehending. The objects to which we attach our hopes can only yield in return transitory and qualified happiness; and often, instead of the gratification that we anticipate, bring to us misery and disappointment. He alone is our enduring and glorious hope: the bliss that he promises has no parallel. We are sure to reach this if we are faithful; to be filled with it, for it surpasses all that we can dream of on earth; to obtain, with the certainty of preserving, for God will never withdraw a gift which he has permitted us to win; and the same hand has given us, at the same time, liberty and immortality. Either we must root out from the heart of man every sentiment by which it is ennobled and purified, or we must struggle to combine them all in one mingled feeling of love and adoration for the Creator.

But wherein lies the necessity of showing that we ought to love God? We do not demonstrate this, we only recall it; for love is the foundation of worship, or, to speak more correctly, worship is the love of God expressed in act.* Now, if it is just and necessary to express legitimate love, it results from thence that worship is an homage which man cannot refuse to the Creator.† Undoubtedly, the best way of evincing the love and gratitude with which God has inspired us, is to practise our prescribed duties; but we have many reasons for good conduct, and when the desire of honouring God is included amongst them, we

* "Nec colitur nisi amando."—*St. August., Epistola* cxl. *Ad Honor.* cap. xviii. no. 45.

† "As soon as we believe that God alone is entitled to our entire love, and in consequence, that this love expands itself over our individual essence as over every other limited good, according to its limits, then we shall find religion entirely developed in our hearts."—*Fenelon, Second Letter on Religion*, chap. xvi. 4.

are bound to make this evident to our fellow-men by external signs which cannot be mistaken. Let us consider ourselves in the world, as children in the house of their father. Let us, at first, testify our respect and gratitude by exemplary conduct and unreserved submission; but, at the same time, let us not imagine that all our duties are faithfully discharged, unless we seek and embrace every opportunity of expressing our sentiments by action and utterance. There are many who question the necessity of formal worship. God, they say, has no need of worship. This may be true. But the perfection of God does not release man from his duties. When our benefactor is placed so high above us that we can do nothing for his glory or happiness, we are not the less bound to express our gratitude. God loves the world, because he has chosen to make it; and he loves man with a preference of affection, because he has created him intelligent and free. We shall not inquire with Malebranche,* whether it is himself that he loves in us; for we are here considering only the result. Is it not rash to affirm that he is indifferent to our worship and our love, when we know that he rejoices in us, and loves us? God had no necessity for creating the world. It is both reasoning and acting badly to seek a pretext for our own failings in the perfection of the Divine essence. We can only speak with fear and hesitation of the nature of God; but we are called upon to express ourselves with certainty when we deal with the obligations owing to him by man. But what we chiefly propose to consider here, is, not the right which God has to worship, but the necessity that we feel of tendering our adoration.

This necessity is so powerful, that of itself it casts a degree of public discredit on any school of philosophy which advocates principles opposed to worship and prayer. We feel instinctively that a system without God, or the God of which is deaf to us, is a mere creation of the fancy. It refuses what we demand above everything else. Very few minds devote themselves to the study of metaphysics from an abstract love of truth, whatever that truth may be. It is almost always some moral necessity which draws the soul to philosophy. We wish to be re-assured, sustained, consoled; we desire to have an invisible world laid open to our hopes, when we find in this life, nothing but oppression and misery. We have no right to complain of this character of

* Holy Scripture says also, "The Lord hath made all things for himself." *Proverbs*, xvi. 4.

philosophy, and to cry out that knowledge is not built upon passion or feeling. That which is true of all other sciences cannot apply to the exclusive study of man. Here there is no possible abstraction, and the question involves our entire existence. The necessities of the heart are not less real or legitimate than those of the understanding. Passion ought not to be more foreign to the philosophy than to the history of human nature.

There are certain minds controlled, as it were, by a ruling necessity of placing themselves in direct communication with God, and of expressing the sentiments of love and adoration which they bear towards him. Souls imbued with this mystical ardour give vent to their sensations through very different channels, according to the gifts with which they are endowed. Some intrench themselves in inward meditation, and become estranged from, and almost indifferent to, the world: others indulge in a sort of fury against this terrestrial life, and all who are attached to it. Their penitential austerities terrify the vulgar, who cannot comprehend (do they comprehend it themselves?) that this inveterate war against creation is nothing more than an enthusiastic homage rendered to the Creator. In some instances the soul becomes at the same time mystical and expansive, and this particular disposition produces poets and devotees. These dispositions are rare, although less so than may be imagined; but there are hosts of religiously disposed minds who, without being carried away by enthusiastic love, feel a sort of attraction towards worship, and would find themselves isolated, disinherited, and miserable in this world if they could not pray incessantly, and at all times associate God with their fears and wishes. It has been remarked long since, and with truth, that the most unbelieving spirits cannot escape as much as they hope (strange hope!) from the experience of religious sentiment. They follow their usual course in the current of affairs, as long as settled habits sustain and occupy them; but if any extraordinary event deranges their position, and drives them towards the new or unknown, if especially, calamity falls upon them, a name which they think they have forgotten rises involuntarily to their lips. If not a positive hope, it takes the form of a regret, and that alone amounts to a prayer.

A poet has said in a verse which has become celebrated: "If there were no God, we should be obliged to invent one.* "

* "Si Dieu n'existait pas, il faudrait l'inventer."—*Voltaire.*

He is mistaken; we are never permitted to announce or to propagate an error. But Voltaire would have been in the right if he had said, If God existed not, the heart of man would be an enigma, for the heart absolutely requires God, and is compelled to hope and believe in him.

It is in vain for reason to demonstrate to us that if we follow her precepts, life will become more endurable; a portion of evil will always remain which we can neither explain nor bear without having recourse to the invisible world. The maxims of the stoics seduce a few, but they govern a section almost imperceptible. Of all paradoxes, the most difficult to establish is that which denies the existence of pain.

Man is naked and defenceless; his intelligence procures him shelter and nourishment, while at the same time it protects him from the attacks of wild animals and his own species. But if he were reduced to the savage state he would cease to be himself, he would be no longer man. In civilised life, which augments his necessities while it elevates his desires, he is compelled to be equal to his own wants. An appalling proportion of human beings are deficient in intellectual cultivation; many suffer from cold and hunger; sometimes the latter privations are doubled by the proximity of luxury. Poets and philosophers remark emphatically on this, that money does not constitute happiness. A convenient theory for those who repeat it in the midst of all the enjoyments of life. No: undoubtedly money does not comprise happiness; but in civilised society the absence of money creates positive misery. If it be asserted that there are greater evils, or that this privation must be endured rather than that the immortal soul should be defiled, so far all is just and true; but this admission does not prevent us from feeling that it is fearful not to possess the common necessaries of life for ourselves and those that belong to us. There is an axiom, which we sometimes have repeated, equally repulsive to those who have suffered themselves, and who have witnessed the sufferings of others. "No one," they say, "dies of hunger." This is either a mistake or a falsehood. People die of starvation in a ditch in the fields, or in town before the window of a baker's shop. Many, amongst those who are not absolutely starved, die from insufficient or unwholesome food; or from having earned their pittance of bread in an unhealthy toil; or sink under illness for want of remedies or rest.

We all agree in eulogising labour, and in declaring that it strengthens and consoles; but there is such a thing as labour

multiplied upon labour. If the reader has ever been led by curiosity to descend into the catacombs of Paris, where you walk between four stone walls so narrow and low that you can touch them on every side, and where you may advance for a league without feeling anything but that description of sepulchre through which you travel without change of situation; where you can scarcely breathe for want of air; where the soul is weighed down by the sensation of that thick crust of rock and earth under which you are buried,—you may chance to have encountered an isolated workman, dragging along with slow steps, and by the light of a miserable candle, a wheelbarrow loaded with unhewn stones. He has been there from the earliest dawn to dusk, and he must return again to-morrow. Does he earn enough by this labour to keep his children from hunger and cold?

Of all the feelings that bind us to the world, the strongest is paternal love. It increases every day, even when we believe it has reached a point beyond which there is no augmentation. The parent bears every thing for the child; toil, solitude, want of clothing, and want of food. He braves death under every form; wounded or dying, he forgets his own agony to supply some little comfort to that dear life which soon will lose his frail support. This love without limit is the last sensation which the heart retains. We can comprehend that the world would be a desert to the father if that eye were closed, if that smile were quenched in death. Yet nature breaks the tie. She casts the opening life into the grave, and condemns the parent to survive.

These catastrophes are not universal, yet the catalogue is a long one! Every hour that we live brings with it the chance of a disaster. There is a misfortune yet greater than closing the eyes of a son—that of beholding him a criminal. Imagination would tire before we could exhaust the list of human calamities.

Even our tenderest affections, love and friendship, have their peculiar sting. If we are not betrayed, we are depreciated. Our best intentions are misrepresented as crimes. At every instant we are wounded in our tastes, in our most delicate perceptions, in our most anxious scruples. We devote ourselves for our country, and we are repaid by imprisonment or exile. We cannot even carry with us the reputation of honest citizens: the calumnies of the conqueror pursue us without shame or remorse, even in the miseries to which he has consigned us. We are considered by our own party as little better than unskilful or ambitious dupes. We think that we have sacrificed ourselves

for a principle, and at last, as if by chance, an objection starts up until then unperceived. Suddenly the entire edifice falls, carrying away all the fruits of our toil, all our long devotion and sacrifices, and our hearts and our lives have no longer a resource to cling to. Genius itself has sometimes proved a fatal gift; not alone to Columbus, who purchased glory by misfortune, but to a legion of others, who have perished in their labours, unknown, insulted, and trampled under foot, and sometimes even deprived of the consolation of knowing their own strength.

What resource have we against so many evils? Glory? Let us not adopt this mistaken flattery. Glory follows success, and is nothing more than a time-serving courtier. It belongs to the Alexanders and Cæsars, those crowned executioners, who would have been consigned to the gibbet by the police of all nations if they had exercised their talents on the highway. With a few more battalions, Cartouche would have been a worthy associate. The empty bubble of glory is not worth feeding on by anticipation. The pleasure of being inscribed after death in the records of memorable deeds, and of furnishing a subject for oratorical display, is a poor compensation for the mortifications and iniquities of an entire life! There is but one true power, the sentiment of virtue; but where is the soul to which it suffices? Such an exception is to be met with, for the true exaltation of humanity, from age to age; but let us not attempt to measure men by the standard of heroes!

What then are we to do? To what are we to attach ourselves? To whom are we to have recourse when the world has failed us? Where are we to address our sighs upon the brink of the grave? In whom are we to trust when our love is repulsed, our virtue calumniated, and our honour tarnished? Towards whom are we to lift our cries against the pitiless disdain, against the closed hearts which reject the offered sacrifice? Something within inspires us to raise our eyes to heaven, and to call God to our aid. This is why so many men unacquainted with science listen eagerly to those who speak to them of the future. It is that they may adore and supplicate, that such a multitude of souls disinherited in this world, dream of the invisible universe, even when the lights of philosophy are denied to them. If our nature is made to suffer, it is also made to pour out our sufferings to God, and to find in that complaint a solace and an encouragement. Prayer softens, or rather destroys, solitude; from the moment when the world abandons and flies us, we find ourselves once more

in presence of the only friend who never deceives, of him whose name is Justice.

Prayer is not only a resource under calamity, but a preservative against crime. A man yields himself up to the influence of passion: instead of remembering the lessons he has acquired in youth, he dreams of nothing but pleasure and interest. The violence of the sensations he has stirred up within himself produces such a tumult in his soul, that he is lost to every thing else. He applies the utmost resources of his intelligence to the gratification of his appetites, and while he satiates them, he dreams only of the means by which they can be revived, to be again glutted with enjoyment. In this utter subordination of his entire being to pleasure, and the search after pleasure, he loses his perception of what is beautiful and just; his will, incessantly drawn in one direction, loses its active powers and becomes incapable of resistance. His reasoning faculty, badly cultivated, supplied through deteriorated organs, full of disgraceful sophisms, weakened, and misled, can no longer distinguish or follow truth; all that it retains of strength is employed in the indulgence of ignoble appetites, and perhaps, at last, sinks even below the level of animal instinct. Thus falls from day to day this noble creature, made to reign over creation and over himself, when, instead of turning towards heaven, and commencing the life of the future upon earth, he takes the world for his all, attaches to it his concentrated power, and glories in the oblivion of everything else. What can draw him back from these abysses in which he revolves? Perhaps a sign alone was wanting which might once more recal God to his thoughts. This single idea would have assisted him to conquer himself. The name brings with it an accompanying train of all that is grand and noble. It signifies virtue and truth. It affords a union of all the pleasures which the soul desires, and compared with which the rest are as nothing. It is a light which exhibits the rottenness of the evil passions under its real aspect. However debased a mind may be, there is somewhere within a collection of touching and revivifying remembrances which the mighty name of God once more awakens. Every physician of the soul knows that the cure is possible from the moment when the patient can be induced to pray. Thus, whether as a consolation or a remedy, prayer occupies an important place in human life. We shall not inquire, with the philosophers of the seventeenth century, whether a nation of atheists could possibly exist; we shall content ourselves with saying, that the religious

sentiment is the most powerful of all social ties. It need not be argued that the family bond is more influential, for filial piety is but a form of religion. It is the thought of God which completes the sanctification of the domestic hearth, that hallowed centre of every tender and social affection. Take that thought entirely away from any associated people, and they are no longer united as a nation except by interest and fear. The civil law, in their estimation, is nothing but a social contract, by which they give on the condition of receiving. But if they give always, and receive nothing in return, they become dupes with their eyes open. That which is pompously denominated the sentiment of fraternity, or the religion of patriotism, ceases to have any signification. Citizens are merely associates, but not brethren. Never will devotion or self-sacrifice find a place in a state so constructed; never will this compact, founded on such a basis, be regarded as indissoluble by any one who sustains injury from it. If we wish to create one consolidated family, possessing moral unity, tradition, and honour; all the members of which are to consider themselves bound by mutual responsibility; whose laws are understood and respected, even when they punish; it is indispensable that the name of country should call up religious ideas, that every citizen should believe himself bound to his native land by divine dispensation; that the transmission of a moral code from father to son should establish a relationship between all who tread the same soil, and speak the same language; that the laws should rest, not on the balance of interests, but on the eternal perception of justice; and that in token of this origin, they should be promulgated in the name of God.

But can a form of worship, whatever may be its nature, or even a prayer, which is the simplest act of worship, be reconciled with such a providence as we have described? If we could figure to ourselves God as a father incessantly occupied with the happiness of each of his children, enjoying their pleasures, and participating in their troubles, attentive to their daily wants, and modifying general laws to meet their necessities, capable of being moved by a fervent entreaty, and of granting to a persevering solicitation, a boon, which, in his plans and wisdom, he had intended to refuse,—prayer would then be at the same time possible, useful, and efficacious. But in this touching picture of divine solicitude there are features which exceed the truth. They only bring God towards us, on the condition of degrading him. When we consider his perfection, it becomes impossible to admit that he can change any

thing he has once determined; and that such a change should be caused by the intercession of a being so frivolous and improvident as man. It is in vain to seek an outlet from this conclusion, for if God modifies his own will, he ceases to be immutable; he is not always equal and like to himself; he falls, as we do, within the action of movement and time, and infinity escapes from his nature. The resolution which God had formed was the best that he could adopt; in allowing himself to change it, he does less than the best: he diminishes himself twice over, in forming a bad resolution, and in doing so through weakness. To escape from these consequences, we must suppose, on the contrary, that it is we who improve the designs of God, and enlighten him upon what is good. None of these hypotheses can hold ground; we blush to express, and we feel pain while we listen to them. This God, so good in appearance, is but an imperfect artisan, whose works require to be continually repaired, and who must, of necessity, mend them badly if he listens to all our unreasonable and contradictory prayers. It is futile to say that he only yields to our supplications when they are reasonable: this is mere waste of words, for they can only be reasonable when they conform to his will, which amounts to saying that he never listens to them at all.*

Thus, God is immutable. He never varies his designs, and our prayers have no power to alter them. We find ourselves placed between two truths, which appear to contradict each other: the first, that prayer with us is a duty and a necessity; the second, that it is useless, impotent, and impossible.

The contradiction is more apparent than real. The facts resulting from it, so far from inducing us to renounce prayer, enlighten us as to the true character of worship.

In the first place, prayer is not absolutely demanded; it may and can be frequently an act of thanksgiving. In this sense, all difficulty disappears. We are bound to thank God for the good that we enjoy, since all is derived from his bounty and benevolence; and we are also bound, if we are wise, to thank him even for preserving the laws of nature, for this regularity forms the essential condition of universal order. To pray, is, above all things, to adore. The first object of worship is the glory of God; the necessities of man occupy but a secondary position. * We should not be the less enjoined to prayer, even though we were certain that our prayers would produce no beneficial result.

Prayer, besides, is efficacious in itself without the intervention

* See Note at the end.

of God. What is praying but to think of God, of his glory, his goodness, and his perfection? Can we conceive and express thoughts like these, without finding ourselves bettered and sanctified by their presence in the soul, without feeling an impulse of love towards him who is the object of our adoration, without entertaining a disgust for every degrading passion, and for every propensity unsanctioned by justice? Let us then thank God, not for yielding to our prayers, but for having permitted us to pray.*

Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged, that prayer is not solely an act of thanksgiving, or a sanctifying aspiration in itself. It often becomes a supplication; and, perhaps we may be permitted to say, that the most perfect form of prayer is that which combines both characters. Now, when prayer comprises a request, it seems difficult to reconcile this with divine immutability; for, on the one hand, we ask to obtain; and, on the other, God never changes his decrees. To disentangle this contradiction, let us first, before we dwell on the immutability of God, inquire what we can demand from him. Undoubtedly nothing that is wrong, for it would offend his all-perfect nature even to conceive a desire contrary to virtue. Neither can we address him with frivolous applications. We cannot say, "Command this pear to ripen;" or, "Grant that I may gain this lawsuit." We are not allowed to require of God what we should blush to ask of a friend. Even though the matter involved our whole fortune, is it consistent with the feeling of a religious mind, only to appear before the Creator to make him a confidant in a question of avarice? To the struggles excited by covetousness, God is indifferent; or if he interferes, it is only to aid courage and perseverance. It is therefore by work, and not by wishes or vows, that we can hope to succeed. In running across a plain, suddenly the ground gives way, and I am thrown down. "Save me, O my God!" is the cry which nature inspires me to utter. But how will God save me? By a miracle, in suspending the action of the laws of gravity? No—such an expectation never crosses my mind. I implore God to find me some protecting stay, instead of allowing me to sink into the abyss. But this branch or support is there, in the very direction of my body. If it were so placed before I uttered my prayer, I have prayed needlessly; if it were not, and God has placed it at the moment, the miracle is not less surprising than would be a

* "Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me."—*Psalm* lxvi. 20.

suspension of the laws of gravity. Thus, my prayer, seriously addressed, becomes the formal demand of a miracle.* In reality, it is but the unreflecting instinct of a weak being, who feels that he is about to perish, and invokes the God from whom he derives his existence. If we were always sensible of what we do when we pray, we should not so readily ask for miracles, neither should we request them, to obtain another day upon earth of absence from God.

During infancy, we depend on those who surround us for all our bodily wants; then, we are allowed to ask; but as the mind and the arm acquire strength, we rise to the dignity of labourers, and achieve the great symbol of liberty, personal independence. From that moment, it becomes our duty and pride to support ourselves; to earn our daily bread by the sweat of the brow; to repel danger by resistance, and to stand forth in the light, assuming our proper position by energy and capacity. If, in our turn, we have children to protect, our labour and responsibility increase, and our importance augments with these obligations. There can be no finer spectacle than that of the father of a family, who understands his task, and executes it faithfully. He indulges in no repose but when absolutely necessary; he selects or submits to his work, and gives himself up to it with all his strength; he applies his resources of body and mind to the government, education, and protection of his young family. If the produce of his exertion is insufficient, the first portion retrenched is that of the father. This belongs to his position. If misfortune visits them, despite his perseverance and economy, it is he who first perceives, and long conceals the danger, who struggles against it in secret, and who finally discloses it with reluctance, and sets the example of resignation. His necessities must be repeatedly demonstrated to him, before he makes up his mind to borrow, for to borrow is to live on the wages of another, to profit by another's labour. Such is the law and lot of man. It is not pride which teaches him to rely exclusively on his own

* "I converse with him, I allow all my faculties to be penetrated with his divine essence, I am moved by his benefits, I bless him for his gifts, but I do not pray to him. What should I require? That he should change especially for me the order of existence? That he should operate miracles in my favour? I, who ought to love above all things the system established by his wisdom, and maintained by his providence, do I desire that this system should be deranged for me? No—such an audacious wish would deserve to be punished rather than granted."—*J. J. Rousseau, Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Curate.*

efforts; it is a mingled sense of duty and justice. What he is in the midst of his equals he ought to be before God; laborious, persevering, resigned; enjoying good fortune with moderation, and enduring evil with courage.

But if we are not to implore Heaven either in pain or trouble, for what can we legitimately pray? We may ask for strength, resignation, and virtue, for the benefit of the soul, rather than for the advantage of the body; for what is our destiny rather than for what belongs to our probation. Such is the only true and lawful prayer.* We ought not to say, "O God, make my corn to grow," but, "Give me strength to sow," or rather, "Console me if I have gathered no harvest." We should not exclaim, "Grant that I may win my lawsuit," but, "Let the suit be gained by him who has justice on his side, and if I am to lose, let me bear the disappointment with the fortitude of a man."†

This is the description of prayer we are now speaking of, and as in reality it amounts to no more than a firm desire to do what is right, and an aspiration towards God, there is nothing in this which is not perfectly reconcilable to divine immutability.

Malebranche, at the same time a philosopher and a priest, incapable in his latter capacity of renouncing prayer, and equally prevented as a philosopher from impugning the immutability of God, supposes, that by an eternal decree, the Creator has willed that grace should be extended to all who invoke him with fervour and sincerity. Thus, pardon is, as it were, prepared for us when we implore it, without the necessity or the intervention of any temporary act on the part of omnipotence.‡ This is an ingenious hypothesis, against which Malebranche sees no serious objection, and which suffices to render prayer an actual demand.

* Kant goes so far as to consider prayer in the light of superstition, when it is elaborated into formal expressions. "Because," he says, "God requires no explanation of the desires conceived within us."—*On Religion*, conclusion of part iv. But if prayer is only an aspiration towards God, and towards him who is the source of all good, it may, according to Kant, be found effectual, or rather, it may produce a moral amendment, and consequently may be admitted by natural religion. The analogy between this doctrine and that of Malebranche is very striking, particularly if we note the difference of origin between the two schools of philosophy, and between the characters of the professors.

† "Mighty Jupiter, give us all true benefits, whether we ask them or not; and remove from us all evils, even when we blindly demand them."—*Plato, Second Alcibiad.*, translation of V. Cousin, vol. v. p. 188.

‡ "Whether we cultivate the ground or leave it barren, it rains neither more nor less. The rain falls as usual, in compliance with the general laws of nature, by which God preserves the universe. In like manner, the distribution

It appears, at the first glance, that a pre-existing law which applies itself necessarily when the occasion is offered, cannot respond to that desire for direct, intimate, and personal communication, which is essential to prayer; but when we figure to ourselves the eternal decrees of God under the form of an abstract law, we forget that the past, the present, and the future exist only in our own beings and imaginations, and that God being eternal, his nature embraces neither past, nor present, nor future. We say that his decrees precede, accompany, and follow our actions, because we express ourselves in human language, and think with human intelligence: but while we submit to this necessity, we feel that it misleads us.

We read in a celebrated treatise attributed to Jamblichus, that prayer does not act directly upon God, for the finite cannot act upon the infinite; but that the grace of God acting according to general laws and with infinite power, invariably tends to manifest itself whenever it encounters no obstacle; and directly so in us without any particular act of the Deity, as soon as we have placed ourselves in a fitting state to receive it through the medium of prayer.*

These are undoubtedly the opinions and language of a Christian, and are almost entirely in accordance with Malebranche.

In conclusion, it is not devoid of interest to retrace the origin of these different hypotheses in the theory by which Aristotle endeavours to explain the relations between eternity and time, or, which amounts to the same thing, of the immutable with the changeable. God, he says, is immovable; therefore he does not act upon the world to move it. At the same time the world is movable, but cannot move of its own will, neither can it have any other cause for its movement but the immovable God. Now, how can a being, without moving itself, become the cause of motion? By acting as a final cause.† For instance, when a general directs a movement to be executed by his army, and places a standard upon a given point while he orders his soldiers to rally round it, every man fixes his eyes upon this immovable signal, and knows, while he looks upon it, on what spot he is to take post: or again, when a mariner finds himself in open sea, far distant from any shore, he selects a particular star towards which he guides his vessel. God is the star which serves indif-

of pardon or favour is not regulated by our natural merits."—*Ninth Discourse on Metaphysics*, sect. 12.

* Jamblichus, *Treatise on Mysteries*, part i. chap. xii.

† Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, book xii. chap. vii.

ferently as a Pharos for the world and for man, and universal harmony results from this movement towards a single point of light.

There is something dazzling in these three hypotheses; but when we examine them closely, we discover that they fail in the proof of what they are intended to demonstrate. They even establish more firmly the immutability and, we may almost say, the indifference of God. It is only by a palpable equivocation that Aristotle can speak of Providence after having demonstrated that God takes no thought of the world. Jamblichus and Malebranche himself, who desired to establish between God and man the same reciprocation of demands and benefits which exist between a father and son, are compelled to say that pardon is prepared for all by a general will, in virtue of which it is universally diffused without any individual act of God. What can we say more? And what does Malebranche gain for his hypothesis, beyond the power of expressing himself like the million while thinking as a philosopher. No; let us try as we may, it is impossible to draw God from his immutability, and his eternity. The best of all prayers is the love of God. To love him, and to love and wish for what is good, form the true essence of worship. "There are few indeed," exclaims Fenelon, "who pray; for where are they who desire what is truly good in their hearts?" *

Let us then be assured that prayer and worship constitute an important duty; and that by improving the mind, by elevating the soul towards God, by bringing before us under an animated and striking semblance the other duties we are called upon to perform, they serve to render labour agreeable, and to encourage resignation and hope.

Prayer, then, understood and explained, has nothing in common with superstition. It is healthy and strengthening; it encourages exertion, and inspires a detestation of sloth; it glorifies God without debasing man. It substitutes no empty ceremonies for solid virtue. Far from disturbing and enfeebling reason, it adds to it light and life by bringing it back to its origin. It is the tie which binds man to man, and connects us earth with Heaven.†

* *Manual of Piety*, "Opinion on Prayer." § 2.

† "God desires that men should love one another, that they should live together like brothers in the same family, and like the children of one father. They are, therefore, bound to mutual improvement, instruction, correction, exhortation, and encouragement; they are called upon to join in praise of the common father of all, and to love him with all their hearts."—*Fenelon, Third Letter on Religion.*

CHAPTER II.

ON THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY IN MODERN SOCIETY.

"A religion may be natural although it has been revealed; it is sufficient that men can understand it by the sole exercise of their reason."—*Kant, On Religion within the Limits of Reason*, part iv. chap. i.

To estimate correctly the influence of religious philosophy in modern society, and to foresee how it may operate in future, we shall commence by comparing natural with positive religion. Let us take the argument from the beginning, and compare dogmas in the first instance, that we may be able afterwards to examine rules and their influences with more precision and authority.

A positive religion is a combination of revealed tenets and precepts. Natural religion is the union of the moral and religious doctrines which philosophy can establish by observation and reasoning. Thus, God himself teaches us the truths of positive religion; while man, on his own risk and responsibility, endeavours to discover the facts of natural religion.*

The first distinction which arises from this double origin, is, that philosophy is compelled to prove all its dogmas separately, while in positive religion it suffices to show that revelation has taken place, and that the doctrine offered for belief is really therein contained.

For example, if philosophy undertakes to demonstrate Providence, it must establish as a preliminary, that God is good, intelligent, and omnipotent; it must show how inconsistent it would be with the goodness of God to abandon men after having created them, and by an inductive process it must conclude by convincing itself and others, that God actually governs the destiny of the world.

But the minister of positive religion has no occasion to appeal to any of these arguments. As soon as he has proved the existence of revelation and the authenticity of the books in which its history is contained, he has only to show that the doctrine of Providence is taught by these authorities. The sacred text stands in the place of proof, and every mind is required to acknowledge its entire sufficiency. If to assist faith, the minister

* Kant, *On Religion within the Limits of Reason*, part iii. chap. v.

man can possibly indulge. In the same degree in which it is reasonable to exclude from the church all who disbelieve the doctrines which the church inculcates, so is it equally criminal to employ force to compel those who are void of faith to enter into that church. This external or civil intolerance, so exclusively unjust, is entirely comprised in the employment of force: beyond that engine, it has neither lawful defence, argument, nor apostleship.* The priest who discusses a doctrine, who shows in what points it departs from orthodoxy, who interdicts to the believers in his communion the use of dangerous books, who seeks out unbelievers and endeavours to convert them by persuasion,—in all this, he merely discharges his duty. He may have ecclesiastical, but he has no civil intolerance.† If, combining the temporal with the spiritual power, either directly or by influence, he persecutes or occasions persecution; if he either institutes or causes to be enacted laws which restrain the free manifestation of thought, which destroy civil and political equality between the faithful and the incredulous, and which demand from dissenters the external observance of the doctrines they have rejected;—if without possessing this direct influence on temporal authority, he employs the spiritual arm to interfere with the liberty, rights, or interests of unbelievers, by transforming their tenets, calumniating their intentions, or misrepresenting their words and actions, thus appealing to violence by indirect means, then he becomes intolerant to the extreme degree that public conviction denounces. He sins against his religion, which he renders odious, against society, which he scandalises and divides, and against all whom he condemns to the calamity of proscription, or to the still greater misfortune of hypocrisy. There was once a time, when by a

* "And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?

"Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?"—*St. John*, xviii. 22, 23.

† "The doctrine of J. J. Rousseau, as laid down in his *Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Curate*, differs from that which we have here expressed. "The distinction between civil and theological toleration," he says in a note, "is puerile and vain. The two are inseparable, and one cannot be admitted apart from the other. The angels themselves could not live in peace with men whom they were obliged to look upon as the enemies of God." Ecclesiastical intolerance does not compel Christians to see enemies of God in those who reject their particular creed; it calls upon them only to deny that they are Christians. The toleration which Rousseau seems to understand resembles indifference; and they explain the conduct of his Savoyard curate, who repeats the service of the Church although an unbeliever.

lamentable error the church confounded the right of imposing its doctrines on those who acknowledged its authority, with the privilege of exercising that authority over those who refused to recognise it. It was then intolerant within and without; not only estranged from, but hostile to liberty; she taught by confiscation, by the sword, and the stake, instead of by preaching, free discussion, and example. It is impossible to deny these facts, which history records, and it would be unjust to attribute them to anything but human passions.

In speaking of intolerance under its various forms, we have abstained from particularising the Catholic church. This is not from any feeling of vain affectation. What we have said of religious intolerance in general, applies equally to every distinct creed. The absurd paganism of Greece was guilty of intolerance in the worst degree, when it compelled Socrates to swallow the hemlock. Calvin causing Michael Servetus to be burnt at Geneva, differs in nothing from the inquisition condemning a relapsed Jew to the torture and the stake. A few months ago, a great outcry was raised because an Italian subject was condemned to a convict prison for having been converted to Protestantism; but Europe had heard, about a year before, how, in one of the Northern States, the law had sentenced a citizen to death who from a Lutheran had become a Catholic. Between the *autos-da-fé* of Spain, and the persecutions recently inflicted on the Ruthenian church,* in the north of Europe, the only distinction to be drawn is that which separates the genius of two nations and two different ages. The dogma has nothing to do with the question. Whatever it may be besides, it is unquestionably the same passion and the same crime. It is so certain that civil intolerance is not attached to doctrine, and does not naturally flow from the religious principle, that philosophy itself has sometimes become a persecution. It was so under the reign of Julian, who condemned christians to the flame, because they refused to worship the gods of the empire. It became so again under the French republic, when in the name of Reason, the civil power modified the spiritual constitution of the church, and finally suppressed the exercise of worship, and

* The Ruthenian Church, here named, is a section of the Greek communion, who had re-united themselves to the Roman Catholics in various points of discipline and ritual observances. They are disseminated in Poland and on the western frontier of Russia, and decrease gradually, in consequence of the persecutions to which they are exposed from the orthodox Russian Church, which uses and abuses the privileges of state religion.

proscribed the priests. It is still so, at present, as often as by reviving the memory of ancient quarrels, which ought to be forgotten, or by indulging in an unprofitable spirit of retaliation, it reproaches the different churches with practising ecclesiastical intolerance, and attempts at the same time, either directly, through the laws, or indirectly, by an appeal to public opinion, to oppose obstacles to the free manifestation and exercise of religious feeling. The intolerance of philosophy is a complete mistake, and approaches insanity. Philosophers are, in the world, the theorists and apostles of liberty: it is doubly detestable to suppress the freedom in others which we demand for ourselves, and to do this while we make a show of proclaiming its fruitfulness and enjoyments.

From these reflections, we conclude:—That the political intolerance which employs force to constrain men to the outward profession of a doctrine they disbelieve, is invariably the crime of an individual or a chartered community, and that nothing in the nature of positive religion can either explain or justify it.

That, on the contrary, the very principle of all positive religion, which reposes on direct revelation, compels it to ecclesiastical intolerance; and finally, that philosophy being founded on reason, and consequently on liberty, neither can, nor ought to, practise intolerance, under any form whatever.

Let us now follow up our parallel, by no longer comparing sources, but doctrines, and ask ourselves what problems are distinctively applicable to positive and natural religion, and how these problems are to be solved in the church and in the schools.

Positive and natural religion answering to the same necessities are to be examined by the same questions. The object of all religion is to ascertain the origin of man, the rule of his conduct, the aim of his life, and the future that awaits him after death. Positive religions supply a clear, precise, and detailed solution to each of these separate problems. Natural religion, which, in its essence, is no more than a portion of philosophy, gives only what it is capable of bestowing. Its obligations are not measured by the wants of society, but by the capacity of human intelligence.

Thus, for example, it belongs to a positive religion, which speaks in the name of God to assign defined and indisputable rules for the least important actions, to declare after what manner God shall be honoured, and to explain the nature of salvation, and the character of the life to come. Natural religion, as far as

laws and rules are concerned, allows a greater latitude to free will; at times, it has only hope to offer in place of certainty. Its only criterion is philosophy, which leaves a wide scope to individual interpretations, and being more separated from argument and speculation, exercises no authority over passive intelligences. In a word, its symbol, if it has one, cannot be separated from the proofs by which it is established, and for this cause, it can never become universal. It guides reason by respecting it.

As regards relative solutions, it is superfluous to say that the distinction is very great between the various positive religions. They differ between themselves as much as schools of philosophy, neither more nor less; and the reason of this is, that on the supposition that they emanate from human intelligence,—a supposition which can only be erroneous in the case of one,—they all spring from the same source with the systems of the philosophers. Thus there are pantheists, materialists, and fatalists. In some of these modes of belief, the doctrine of a future life itself is wanting. In the midst of this diversity, history nevertheless enables us to point out the prevailing tendencies; and we may say, to illustrate these, that the majority of religions admit the direct intervention of Deity in the affairs of men, the efficiency of practical faith, chiefly for salvation, and a future state of rewards and punishments.

While setting forward these comparisons, with the view of more thoroughly comprehending the range and influence of natural religion, although we reason upon positive religion in the abstract, the Catholic faith presents itself individually and incessantly to our thoughts; and after having spoken of the conditions of all positive worship, perhaps it may not be impossible to apply our doctrine to this particular creed, to verify by this application the correctness of the principles we have laid down. Let it be remembered in what follows, that we consider the catholic religion under its form and bearing, without entering into any inquiry as to its origin. It constitutes no part of our plan to ascertain whether the Catholic Church combines a more sincere and legitimate exposition of apostolic revelation than other Christian Churches; but we select it for the particular reason that it separates itself more than the rest from natural religion. Still less do we dream of discussing the proofs upon which christians of opposite communions rest the divine inspiration of the gospel. That question is too complicated and extensive to be approached lightly or to be dismissed in a few pages. We study natural religion, and we speak of Christianity

incidentally, and to enable us more thoroughly to understand the leading object of our inquiry. Nothing can be more sincere than the respect we profess for the Catholic creed; and while we examine it as a work entirely human, we shall endeavour sedulously to avoid any remarks that might wound or offend susceptibilities drawn from a source entitled to the most delicate consideration. We exercise one of the privileges of freedom, and we think that no one has a right to do this, except on the condition of paying deference to all that contains the true elements of grandeur. We know not which is most opposed to the principles of philosophy, religious or philosophical intolerance; and we have learned that liberty and reason are equally outraged, when, through fanaticism, they are checked in the progress of development, or when by a dread of fanaticism the disciples of any religion are denied the right of defending and manifesting their belief.

It is assuredly unnecessary to repeat a fact so evidently true, as, that since the world began, there has never been a religion to be compared to Christianity. Whether we consider the Christian creed in the Catholic Church, where all is regulated with precision, even to the most minute details of doctrine, moral law, and worship; or in the Protestant Churches, which, while maintaining the unity of the belief, with the authority of Scripture, allow reason and liberty to take their part,—we find at every step a metaphysical grandeur, a moral purity, and a depth of observation which command the most profound veneration. The Catholic Church, considered only in its form, and without reference to the creed, is distinguished from other communions by the ritual prescriptions of its worship, the strong constitution of its hierarchy, and the multiplicity and rigour of its doctrinal enactments. We may say of Protestantism in all its varieties, that it manifests a tendency to unite itself with natural religion, in the association of reason, while Catholicism may be correctly designated the pure ideal of a positive faith. This we shall endeavour to show by examining alternately its principles, dogmas, and practice. Catholicism, in common with all other positive religions, has revelation for its origin. This revelation is complete, for it embraces every question that religion can resolve. It is explicit, and contained in a volume which commands the admiration of the whole world. It is supernatural, for it embraces the enunciation of mysteries, which places it at once in a sphere beyond the compass of human reason.

Further, as the revelation is not individual, it requires, to render it perfect, a body for the express purpose of interpretation and preservation, and a transmission through which it is consecrated. This body are the clergy, all the members of which are associated together by the unity of one common faith, and by a skilful organisation which, from the pope down to the lowest clerk, combines this vast association, the greatest that has ever been formed, under a single will, a single spirit, and a single law. No dissension can introduce itself into this unity, for as soon as the required faith is defined, and the rule laid down by supreme authority, whoever hesitates to obey is cut off from the Church. Thus the authority is complete for interpretation and guidance. Tradition, by a natural consequence, obtains in this church all the authority that tradition can possibly acquire ; since the dogma and the rule have been immutably transmitted from generation to generation, even up to the apostles and the Saviour himself; and beyond Jesus Christ by the Jewish people, to the creation of the world. Several of these assertions have been and are still disputed every day, on the ground of historical certainty ; but what we here lay down is the opinion of the Catholic Church on itself. Let us now examine the doctrine. God made the heavens and the earth, and he made them from nothing ; he has created and governs them in perfect goodness. Nevertheless, there is evil in the world. The first man, being free, abused his liberty, and God has punished him in his race. At the same time, as the goodness of God is as infinite as his justice, he consents that an expiation shall be offered, and that by virtue of this expiation man may regain the rank he forfeited by the fall of Adam. Who is to offer this expiation? A God alone can appease the offended justice of a God. Now, there is only one God, but he has three persons—the mystery of the Trinity. One of these three divine persons, God the Son, descends upon earth, takes upon himself the form of man, and dies upon the cross—the mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption. Jesus Christ, by his life and death, is twice our benefactor; for in his life he is an example, and in his death our Saviour. Counting from this sacrifice man may be cleansed from the stain of original sin. He remains free, as our first parent was before he fell, and consequently capable like him of desert or transgression. God, who consents to raise him up again, can also superadd, through his great goodness, the merit of the atonement of Jesus Christ. Thus grace is placed by the side of free-will to guide and sustain him. Grace is necessary

to man to lead him to good; nevertheless in virtue of his liberty of action, he is still found to reject the influence of grace, and to commit evil. The great end which religion assigns to human life is expressed in these words which the Church teaches to young children, and the sublimity of which excites our tears :—"God has created and placed us in the world to know, to love, and to serve him, and by these means to obtain eternal life." The happiness of the future state is described as follows :—"To see God face to face, and to love him with all our hearts through all eternity." To these dogmas, on which the Catholic faith is founded, another must be added, which seems to be enveloped in more obscurity. Beyond the visible world spirits exist infinitely inferior to God, whose creation they are, but at the same time far superior to man.* Amongst them there are degrees and a hierarchy of which we have only an imperfect knowledge;† but we know that they can merit, since one of them is called holy, and they can also forfeit, for another has committed the sin of pride, for which he has been driven for ever from the presence of God.‡ This rebellious archangel is the contriver of evil in this world, and the minister of celestial vengeance in the next.§ It is he who tempted the first man through the first woman; it is he who tempted the Saviour, before the passion, that no human trial might be wanting to the divine victim; it is he who by the snares of pleasure and self-interest tempts man daily, and opposes in his heart the influence of grace; and it is he who will superintend in hell the punishment of the condemned. His power is only derivative and secondary, for even man (through grace) can triumph over it; yet it is not, for that, less formidable.‖ Such is the Catholic doctrine in its fundamental points.

* "God, who is a pure spirit, has chosen to create pure spirits resembling himself, who, like him, live on intelligence and love; who know and love him, as he knows and loves himself."—*Bossuet, Elevations*, 4th week, elev. i.

† "Holy Scripture, which never falsifies, and says nothing without a purpose, has named angels, archangels, virtues, dominations, principalities, and thrones; cherubim and seraphim. Who will undertake to explain these august names, or to tell the beauties and excellences of these transcendent creations?"—*Bossuet, ibid.*

‡ "These exalted beings are created from nothing like the rest: and from that cause, superior as they are, they are liable by nature to sin."—*Bossuet, ibid.*

§ "You have degraded yourselves to the base and malicious occupation of being first our seducers, and afterwards the executioners of the victims you have seduced."—*Bossuet, ibid.*, elev. ii; also, *Sermon on the Foundations of Divine Vengeance.*

‖ "Those who depart from this world with grace and charity, but still

We now return to the consideration of natural religion, in the hope of more thoroughly comprehending its nature by means of the comparison we have drawn.

Natural religion is the enemy of superstition. Its peculiar characteristics are perspicuity, precision, and sincerity. It makes no pretensions to knowledge beyond its attainment; it does not conceal ignorance under high-sounding words; it admits candidly that there are secrets inaccessible to science, and attempts only to determine with certainty points that can be accurately ascertained, and those which through the limited nature of human intelligence are difficult to discover. It imposes its own boundaries, and suffers nothing within them to remain obscure and unexplained. It never dreams or loses itself in clouds, but is always clear, rational, and methodical. There is nothing in it which cannot be reconciled to common sense. It is intelligible to ordinary understanding, while it satisfies spirits of a higher quality. The poetry with which it abounds is vigorous and healthy. It furnishes a sound and solid nourishment to the mind, equally distinct from materialism and ecstasy.

The god of natural religion is not a human deity, whom we can bring down to our own level and measure by our own insignificance; for nothing can be more absurd than to suppose that a god who explains nothing in the world, must of necessity resemble that world; but this unknown divinity strengthens instead of disturbing our reason. He forms our point of departure, as every original principle is the source of demonstration without the power of being demonstrated itself. We know nothing of his nature, beyond that he is complete in intelligence, goodness, and power; nor of his eternity, except that no image of it can be furnished by time. We are better acquainted with him in his works than in himself; but we see everywhere reflected in his works indications of his perfection and greatness. We know that he has created, and we see that he governs the world. We believe and admit creation, although we make no attempt to explain it, for it has no analogy with any human act. In like manner, we follow with love and respect the development of the

liable to the punishments which divine justice has reserved, will suffer them in another life. This is what the Council of Trent proposes to us to believe respecting souls detained in purgatory, without specifying in what these punishments consist; neither does it explain many other similar matters, upon which this holy council maintains a strict reserve."—*Bossuet, Exposition of the Doctrines of the Catholic Church.*

views of Providence, without representing God to our minds as an unskilful and uncertain artificer. The true God has no human attributes. Passion, inconstancy, and effort, belong not to his nature; that serene and omnipotent will extracts worlds from nonentity, with all their incalculable developments; that unlimited intelligence comprehends at the same moment all time and all space; that supreme love embraces simultaneously all created beings, and sees every one present before him in his individual identity. God has placed us in the world to govern while we traverse it. We pass along under his eye and hand, but in the fulness of the liberty derived from him, sustained by the eternal decrees of his power, animated by the never-ceasing love which he feels for the creature he has made. Through him, nothing is wanting to us here below in our only important undertaking, for he has given us duty and freedom; through him, nothing can fail us in the future, for in death he will satisfy the desires of our hearts and minds by giving us himself for nourishment, by filling us with the sight of his glory, and the overflowings of his love. What signifies it that we must tread even over flints upon briars, to arrive at such a termination? True happiness must be conquered to ascertain its real value. We accept the trial courageously; and we convert our sacrifices into a hymn of praise to the glory of the God who supports and calls us. This world, so completely filled with his divinity, is no longer a prison, but a temple.

From the moment when we learn our origin and end, as children of God, destined through his munificent rule to return to him again, we feel that our first duty is to unite ourselves with our heavenly Father, and to employ every moment of life in testifying our gratitude. We owe worship to God, and for our own necessities and consolation we are called upon to adore him. How are we to offer up our praises to the great Creator, who, by his single will, has produced the world from nothing, whose power and grandeur have no parallel, and cannot be expressed by words; who exists above time and space in absolute independence and consummate felicity? Amongst the most signal benefits which God has conferred upon us, we must reckon that he has imposed a law, assigned a task, and furnished an opportunity of serving him, by co-operating, as it were, in his own work. Without liberty, we should be incapable of worship. God has assigned to us, in some measure, for the exercise of our freedom, our active powers, and our duty, a limited sphere, in which, after his example, we

can do good, and contribute to the general unity. We can maintain ourselves wholly and healthfully, in body and spirit, without contracting pollution, without enervating or weakening the understanding. We are enabled to exercise the faculties of the body, to direct the powers of the mind towards eternal truth, and to love everlasting beauty with all our hearts. We can, while following the prescribed path, discern in our front, and on every side, those of our brethren who are condemned to suffer, through ignorance, vice, disease, or calamity, and we can fly to their assistance with indefatigable ardour. We can bind up their wounds, allay their thirst, distribute to them our superfluity, or make them partakers of our competence, enlarge their minds, and cure or revive their hearts; and in the absence of other aid, we can animate them by our example, while we teach them to know and serve God, and to find enjoyment in his service. While looking on life with lofty views, we can devote ourselves to science, labour without intermission, not for ourselves, but in the cause of truth, penetrate the secrets of nature, and distribute to the living world, or consecrate to posterity, those treasures which God has dispensed to us, that our brethren may participate in them through our exertions. Such is the worship which we owe to God, such is the prayer that he loves, and such are the steps by which we can ascend to his presence. God allows churches to be dedicated to his service; but a school, an hospital, or a manufactory, are also temples erected to the glory of his name.* We may address him with prayers, but a simple good action is also acceptable in his eyes. Nature suggests nothing to our lips but these words, "Grant, O Lord, that I may live according to thy law, and after thy heart!" These acts are the first precept and the best prayer.† It is not only the perverse man who is reproved, it is not the blasphemer, the violator of human and divine justice, the murderer, the robber, or the invader of common liberty, who defiles his soul and body by the indulgence of evil passions; but it is the useless sluggard, who buries his own strength, the solitary anchorite, who, made for humanity, separates himself from his kind, who lives only for himself, content to do no positive ill,

* "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."—1 *Samuel*, xv. 22.

† "External ceremonies are nothing more than signs of internal worship, which comprises all that is essential. These ceremonies are intended to impress ignorant man through the senses, and to nourish love in the recesses of the heart."—*Fénélon, Third Letter on Religion.*

as if virtue were a mere negation; who seeks, in the annihilation of the passions, and in an anticipated death, a passive innocence, while he ought to be fighting manfully the struggle of life, sustaining the good fight; endeavouring to love, to think, to act, to leave records of his deeds, to do good, to imitate God, and to scale heaven instead of dreaming that such an enterprise may be attempted!

It has been asserted that natural religion gives to man no creed, and no table of the law. This is at once to calumniate reason and liberty.* What is reason, if not a light and a strength whereby to seek and find the truth? If to arrive at the extent of reason, to clear up, to develop, and to apply the rule, exceptions are necessary, such is the condition and the nature of humanity. God has willed it so in leaving us free. Let us take man in his entire character and attributes. Let us beware how we persuade ourselves that God has given him reason to wrap him up in swaddling-clothes, or liberty to confine him throughout life in the depth of a prison. The schoolmen who, by their pedantic formulas, reduce the human mind to a machine, are not more destitute of sense than the eternal children who cannot understand that it is impossible to walk in the world without leading-strings, by the aid of the reason that serves as a star, and the all-powerful hand that acts as a support. Do not let us offer as a spectacle to God the systematic diminution of his own work. Neither let us reduce intelligence to the condition of instinct, nor bring down free man to the level of an automaton. God gives us the commencement of truth, and the principle of the rule; he also orders us to lay open these premises, to conquer that belief, to apply and to fathom the law. He commands us to live! We ought not to treat liberty as an enemy, since it is the greatest gift our Creator has bestowed upon us. It forms the boast of natural religion to leave liberty untouched in the order of thought and action.

Natural religion has also been reproached with not offering to man beyond this life anything more than an uncertain futurity. All the arguments on which the hope of immortality is built, are open to dispute, in common with every human conclusion. Many minds derive entire confidence from these arguments; others remain in doubt; while some altogether reject the belief in a future state. A hope so much disputed is scarcely

* And yet the whole paragraph which follows seems to us, by its weakness, to prove the truth of the charge. What is "the creed," what is "the law," about which our author declaims?

sufficient to sanction a moral truth. We require during life a faith more confident in itself. Death demands another pillow.

We might reply, in the first place, that justice does not depend on the recompence, but, on the contrary, that the recompence depends on justice; that we are enjoined to do good without afterthought, because it is good; that virtue is not a trade, and that a man worthy of his name ought to be ready to die for virtue, even though death, fulfilling the melancholy expectations of the materialists, should annihilate thought in the dissolution of the body. If truth were useless or injurious, man nevertheless has no right to stain his spirit by a crime; neither is he permitted to sully his liberty by a vice, though honesty should be attended by misfortune and wickedness by prosperity. Never let us lose sight of this controlling and sacred maxim, which ancient philosophy recognised, which forms the basis of stoicism, and which constitutes one of the noblest principles of the Christian doctrine.

But, while recognising the maxim, let us admit its austerity, and feel grateful to God who has rendered virtue not only amiable but fruitful, and who has only ordained it so frequently to suffer in this world, that it may be rewarded in the next. The hope of immortality is one of the reliances of virtue, although by no means the only one; and the dogma of future rewards forms a necessary part of natural religion. But what does this obstinate negation desire of us, which, beaten in the discussion, is compelled to yield to the arguments upon which spiritual philosophy relies when promising immortality to man, and retreats upon an alleged insufficiency of human reason, even going to the length of disputing all certainty, to deprive us more effectually of our principal support? With the exception of truths established by fact, and even these are sometimes contradicted, where is the doctrine either in philosophy, morality, politics, or economy, which is not daily and hourly scorned and treated with contempt? The question is not whether the immortality of the soul is disputed, but whether it is true. The teachers of revealed religion who, when revelation is once admitted, require only the promise of God to assure them of immortality, do not disdain to add to this conviction another equally strong and of a different nature, derived from the demonstrations of the schools. Who then shall dare to despise philosophical evidences, when even revelation itself calls upon reason to acknowledge their efficacy, before requiring faith and obedience? Natural religion, in all its dogmas, possesses a

force and authority similar to that of reason. This suffices for our argument, and those who find it unsatisfactory, to be consistent, must take refuge in scepticism.

But natural religion is not altogether deprived of external worship. Independently of prayer, which every pious man addresses to God in his inmost heart on all the solemn occasions of life, we can and ought to declare our faults loudly, whenever we find ourselves in company with an unbeliever. If we are speaking in public, and it becomes possible to introduce into our discourse some expressions of gratitude to the author of all good, it is our incumbent duty to do so. Still more, if we write, we are bound to draw attention, as often as we possibly can, to the greatness and benevolence of the Almighty. Birth, marriage, and death, which the Christian faith consecrates by solemn ceremonies, are all occasions where the sentiments of a religious soul find opportunities of manifesting themselves. The civil law, although too often impressed with a spirit of denial and assertion, is nevertheless compelled to invoke the name of God, particularly when it requires an oath. It is lamentable to see how many people consider an oath as a mere formality. We hesitate to break a word of honour, but we hold ourselves free from all obligation after an oath voluntarily taken, not from necessity, but through ambition or the desire of gain.* We never reflect that to act thus is to make a public profession of atheism. We justify ourselves in our own eyes by the consequent advantages of perjury. We have blasphemed the name of God, but we have saved a bag of crowns. Such is the tendency of our civilisation. Even those amongst us who respect the nature and effect of an oath, seem to profane its majesty by their deportment. Is it then so difficult to recal to our minds the presence of God? A word suffices to do it, without the aid of official scarfs or accessorial appendages. God is so close to man, so near even to the heart of the atheist, that sincere piety is always understood on the instant. Amongst the funeral processions which pass along our streets, many affect us doubly by the melancholy appearance of the exhibition, and the indifference of the assistants. Nevertheless, let us accompany it to the tomb, and there at the moment of the final adieu, if we discover a single relation or a dear friend, who, with a choking voice, prays God to console the suffering hearts of the mourners, there will no longer be a scoffer in the com-

* A lamentable picture of national morality in France?—Ed.

pany; so powerfully does the sight of present death impress even the most determined unbelievers! We do not require these imposing occasions to render public homage to God. Every one in exalted stations is called upon to recur to this august name in every relative duty which his position imposes; a king in speaking to his people, a father in the familiar intimacy of the domestic circle, a master when he addresses his servants; we are all, in a certain sense, magistrates; for there is always some one who depends on our words and example.

In the Catholic church, families are taught to set apart a particular place for prayer. The poorest peasant has in his cottage an emblem of holiness. Not far remote from the present era, evening worship was in universal practice. The father, surrounded by his children and domestics, performed the clerical office, and addressed God in the name of all. Many patriarchal families, throughout all the countries of Europe, still preserve this pious practice. These are for the mort part usages which natural religion consistently adopts. They belong not to the style of modern ideas; we verge more and more every day towards the suppression of everything that has not an immediate and material object. The father believes that he has done all that is required of him in looking after the worldly future of his children, and in superintending their scientific and literary education. His first duty is to teach them moral rectitude by his words and example; and one of the most efficacious methods of making this penetrate to the depths of their hearts, is to combine the idea of just dealing with the image of God. The parent, addressing God in the midst of his children, renders his natural authority at the same time more sacred and touching by the invocation of that hallowed name; he gives increased strength to the family bond; he unites all holy feelings in every bosom, and imparts mutual support. The more civil institutions by the protection of individual rights tend to break up natural attachments, so much the more ought manners and customs to operate in reaction, so that the religion of the domestic hearth may never be extinguished. All the powers of heaven and earth are not too much to preserve the sentiment of fraternity amongst men. For many ages Christianity has placed in the list of acts of piety, giving alms, and visiting the sick poor. Such acts, properly incited and directed, belong equally to worship and to the work of the missionary. We all hold in our hands a direct means of adoring God by ministering to humanity. This is an evidence

of worship which all the world acknowledges and blesses. Give rather, if you can, an implement of labour, than a sum of money; open a workshop in preference to a hospital. Treat man as if he were a man. Respect in his person industry, activity, and liberty. Above all things, if you desire to adore God and to serve him in assisting the course of his providence, devote your fortune and talents to the instruction of the people. Win men for society and worshippers for God. Enlighten your brethren by combating their prejudices, and by the dispersion of sound doctrines and useful knowledge. If you enter into the obscure and unfurnished hall in which the village schoolmaster teaches children (as poor as himself) to read, ponder on what you see; for by that humble instrument, liberty, civilisation, and religion are promoted. To shut up a seminary of instruction, or to pull down a church, is equally criminal. The most unpretending school is also a sanctuary.

But while we endeavour thus to determine the conditions of an external worship, many serious and honest minds exclaim that there is one already settled, which, as it were, stares us in the face; that which depends on positive religions. We desire to establish a form of public worship, and we are unable to invent one. If we had taken upon ourselves to do so, no one would have followed us, but all the world would have said we were either impostors or tyrants; yet still it appears as if society itself, with its traditions of the past, comes at once to our rescue. According to the supporters of this doctrine, when an established law is found to be just and wise, it is not necessary to insure obedience and respect that the origin of that law should be sought for in the obscurity of time. Pascal has written the following commentary on the force of prescription and custom, the boldness of which no communist has ever surpassed;—"Poor children say, this dog is mine; this is my place in the sunshine. Such is the commencement and image of usurpation throughout the earth." * But is Pascal for this to be pronounced a foe to personal property? Habit and custom confer stability. Time is certainly a consecrator, although far from being the best. Philosophers, we are told, are bound to oppose custom when it is mischievous; but what prevents them from adopting and turning custom to profit, when it happens to be good?

This question of the use of an established form of worship naturally

* Pascal, *Thoughts*, art. vi. 50, edit. Havet., p. 94.

presents itself to the mind, and besets us in spite of ourselves; even though we should close our eyes so as not actually to see, we should still have it brought before us on every side; in established customs, in laws, language, in public monuments, and in all the leading functions of life. If we walk along the streets, we see a church; if we enter a court of justice, we find there a bible or a testament. At every step, we jostle a priest in the costume of his order. We find an image of the crucifixion where roads meet. If a marriage takes place, the family hastens to ask the blessing of a minister of the Gospel. If God sends us a child, on the same day all our neighbours begin to talk of a christening. Some customs appeal to our convictions, others to our regulated habits. If we are not impelled by faith, we are governed by fashion. After death, the body is carried to the church. Few, even amongst unbelievers, dispense with this ceremony. The Catholic clergy sometimes refuse the rites of sepulture to those who have notoriously withdrawn from religious observances. Then follow complaints and exasperation. He who professes no faith in God is the loudest in his outcries. He desires for his corpse a benediction, which he scoffed at while living, and expects in death an accompanying decorum, composed of a priest, and an emblem of Christianity. If the ashes of Voltaire were expelled to-morrow from the Pantheon, and carried to Père la Chaise, a cross would be erected over his tomb. To understand thoroughly this important question, which ought not to be cut short by common-place expressions of oratorical indignation, it is very necessary to distinguish three kinds of religious actions. In the first place, there are those which are not exclusively individual, but which apply to more than one conscience; then there are some which indicate positive adhesion to a particular form of worship, and the text of a belief; and finally, there are others which seem to be entirely passive, and cannot be received by general opinion as professions of explicit faith.

Let us clear up this distinction by examples. To refuse to be married in church is to decline the benediction of a priest: but it is at the same time to deny that permission to another. This is the first case. We might also select for another instance, confession in the hour of death. Reject this if you please; for your self, you have a right to do so; but to take advantage of dying weakness, and to impose a minister of religion on another, either by stratagem or force, is an act of intolerance and oppression. To

refuse confession to one who asks for this consolation in his last moments, is a positive crime.

The distinction established between formal adhesion and simple participation in prayer is not less evident, and the Catholic church furnishes examples in abundance that bear clearly upon this point. In fact, to kneel in a confessional, to make the sign of the cross upon the forehead and bosom, to repeat the Belief, to bow before the absolution of the priest, are all these ceremonies the same as entering with collected meditation into a church, listening to a moral discourse, and uniting the heart and lips in prayers which rise towards the throne of the Eternal? To confess, is to make a direct profession of the Catholic creed; to pray, in a church, is simply to offer up worship at the same time, and in the same place with Catholics. I see a church open, and I walk in without knowing whether it is dedicated to the Catholic or Protestant form. I observe a full congregation, and I hear a minister who delivers a holy and edifying discourse. After the sermon, the whole assembly present rise and sing a hymn. It is evident that I can join in these exercises, and thus participate in the sweet sanctity of adoring God in public without performing any positive act of adhesion to a particular faith. Here is the question stated under its three leading features. Let us now attempt the solution.

If we were to pronounce judgment on the conduct of men, who under these three different circumstances participate in the practical rites of a positive worship, while they admit in reality no tenets but those of natural religion, we should condemn without hesitation all who perform acts of faith, properly so-called; such as the repetition of the belief, communion, and confession. They are evidently guilty of falsehood and perjury, if they avow, before God and man, a creed which is not their own. No subterfuge can palliate such hypocrisy. But we ought assuredly to extend more indulgence to those who fear to wound the consciences of others; or to those religious minds who join prayer without adhering to a particular belief. In general, we ought to be gentle and indulgent in our estimate of human actions, where there is reason to suppose that the intention is pure. Amongst the dissentients who mingle with the crowd of believers, there are perhaps some who think only of honouring God, and there may be others whose sole object is to deceive man. God alone knows and can judge the heart. It is a holy and a salutary maxim to be severe in a judgment of doctrine, but to deal charitably with the conduct of men.

But these reasons being allowed for the indulgence due to involuntary error and weakness, we owe it to the faith we possess to declare that there ought to be neither hesitatiou nor compromise on the question of principles. The sin is great when we formally express a belief which we disavow in our hearts; it becomes more excusable when we assign as a reason or pretext, the obligation of paying respect to the faith of another; but still there is always sin. We ought never to abandon or conceal our faith; every believer is bound to do what he feels to be right, in calmness and sincerity, without endeavouring to provoke others, and without fear. A faith founded on conviction, and confident in itself, is at the same time, gentle and inflexible, equally removed from intolerance and weakness. In truth, to say that it is better to keep aloof, than to associate, even passively, with a form of worship, the symbol of which we do not believe, is to say that we ought never to appear what we are not. This moral precept allows no qualification. It avails nothing to separate ourselves in thought from the congregation while we are present at the ceremony; that presence is, in the opinion of those who see us, an explicit avowal, and when we repudiate it inwardly, we fall into the mistake of a mental reservation. First, then, such conduct is an equivocation, a juggling with truth, a falsehood. Another reason against it is, that it comprises a formal abandonment of principle. Thus, in all points combined, the act is a heavy sin against social and religious morality.

We should not take the trouble of demonstrating a truth so palpable, if we were not convinced that it is constantly misunderstood by the most straightforward minds and the firmest dispositions. Custom closes up our eyes, and hides from us the shame of a proceeding without candour or self-respect. No honest man likes to leave a doubt on the minds of his friends as to his political opinions: by what aberration of common reason then are we less fastidious in what concerns religion? There is seldom consistent dignity in any line of conduct which requires explanation. What is just and true explains itself, and leaves no cloud or doubt on the mind of any one to whom it is addressed. Is it necessary to say, on the other hand, that respect for the conscience and belief of others is an imperative duty? We are allowed to discuss creeds that we do not acknowledge, and, within certain bounds, we are called upon to do so; but in entering on such arguments, we are equally bound to consider no end but truth and the salvation of souls. We may discuss, I repeat, but we have

no right to insult or scandalise. It is, indeed, a melancholy sight to see pious men and philosophers employ abuse and calumny against those who dissent from their opinions in matters of faith. Insult provokes added insult; it irritates and alienates, but converts no one. By what justifiable feeling can we be impelled when we reproach others with their creed? It is not from any desire to enlighten them; neither is it to reclaim them from the errors into which they have fallen. These violent diatribes are the very opposite of sound argument. If they proved anything, it would be against those who indulge in them, and against the belief which inspires hatred instead of a spirit of charity. When we are firmly convinced that we have found the truth, we may pity, but we ought never to hate, those who are still in ignorance.

Our duty then, as regards positive forms of worship, appears to be thus laid down; we ought not to assume a faith which we do not firmly believe; nor take part in ceremonies contrary to those of our own church; nor infringe on liberty by placing ourselves between God and the consciences of our brethren; nor refuse respect to the forms and usages adopted by other men in the sincerity of heartfelt devotion.

When we speak of the respect which upright minds are bound to show towards a creed which they do not profess, let it be clearly understood, that this by no means extends to superstition. Any religion that outrages the moral code, far from being acceptable to God, is nothing more than blasphemy under the guise of piety. It may be said in reply, "Who is to decide this?" All the world can judge as to what is contrary to the immutable principles of right and wrong, and it would be derogatory to human intelligence to deny it the power of discriminating, by unerring signs, religion from superstition. The distinctions may embarrass a legislator who is compelled to examine into the most minute details, but it imposes no difficulty on philosophy, which deals only with the general duty of tolerating and respecting creeds that we do not profess, when they contain nothing offensive to moral propriety.

There are two descriptions of public worship; that which is free and independent of the State, as in all the churches of North America; and that which is constituted by the government, as in Russia and England; or where the government accepts and consecrates the law, as in Naples and Spain. In countries where the civil and religious codes are entirely separated, there may be

many churches; they exist openly in the State but have no connection with it. Under these conditions, worship is public without being official or legal. Other countries, again, have established an intimate union between the temporal and spiritual authorities. In them there is but one religion, or rather the State religion alone has an official existence, and is supported by legal authority; other forms are merely tolerated under certain restrictions.

Attempts have been made at various intervals to form a public worship upon natural religion, independent of the State. These experiments, whatever may have been the intention of their projectors, have never obtained any serious footing. Every regular association requires a governing power, and no power could possibly infuse into the dogmas of natural religion, either the mission of founding public worship or the authority necessary for its direction. The State itself would be unable to assume the religious character without having recourse to an express revelation. There was a moment in the history of France, when strong minds imagined that the whole fabric of society might be overthrown and reconstructed from the very foundation. The Catholic church, which had connected itself with the old system, the king and the aristocracy, was swept away with them, and proscribed by the civil law. It was not only denied, but persecuted. Reason was substituted in its place, but reason ill understood, false, and without a God. Many believed that the celebrated hypothesis of the seventeenth century had become realised at last—a society of atheists. Nevertheless, during the unprecedented extravagances of an epoch, every minute of which was marked by some signal catastrophe, when blood flowed in such torrents that men became indifferent to death, and when the foundations of great future events were laid in terror or despair, people began to ask themselves what could law be without a God? and if it were not in fact the tyranny of a few, what could any social system be that acknowledged no deity, if not an association of individual interests, liable to be annulled at the pleasure of the contracting parties? Under this solution whence did the citizen derive those duties of self-denial and sacrifice, which were on every lip, and which rendered life so painful without any possible reward in future? The Convention, who, in setting up the goddess of Reason, thought only of abolishing every form of established worship, enacted a decree which has been laughed at as ridiculous. In form it might be so, but in substance, it

signified this to a philosopher—no human society can subsist without God. Thus, even at such a time, atheism only lasted six months. Up to this point all was well, but the next step of the existing government was to organise religious festivals. This same National Convention conferred on its president a sort of pontificate. Ceremonies were prescribed, and an altar erected; but it proved, in the end, more easy to overthrow a monarchy, to introduce a fresh code of public law, and to make head against combined Europe with undisciplined conscripts, than to found a new system of religious worship. The political State has no mission to establish creeds, formulas of faith, and ritual observances; it may acknowledge, respect, and protect a particular religion, but it cannot institute one. It has no priests, and recognises magistrates alone. If it erects a church without dedicating it to an exclusive faith, that church will be as empty as was the Pantheon. In a word, natural religion requires prayer, and certain pious actions, rather than public worship.

We must then admit, that no church or religious communion can be founded on natural religion, either independent, or under the auspices of the State. Philosophical worship may be manifested by external signs, but it can never assume a public character.

But the inefficiency of the State in public worahip, properly so called, applies only to rites and formulas. The State never can be priestly, but it is necessarily religious. No government can be atheistic. To be convinced of this, it is simply requisite to remember on what it is based. A government might be atheistic, if it were nothing more than a convention agreed upon between the citizens to protect public interests from private encroachment; in other words, if it were only a social contract. But the doctrine of the social contract is unsound; or, at least, incomplete. This has produced, in reality, a legitimate, but at the same time, an extensive reaction against the theory of the right divine. This latter, now given up entirely by the greater portion of the supporters of legitimacy, by ascribing to royalty a mystic origin, conferred all rights upon the sovereign, and left none to the subject. Under this system, it appeared as if governments were established that one man should be powerful, and not that his power should strengthen and guarantee the common safety and security of all. When the monarch forgot himself, and thought only of his people, he obeyed the general rule which commands every man to do good, and not the individual law,

which calls upon each citizen to sacrifice himself for the public advantage. All that he gave freely to his subjects, or even all that he left in their possession, was received as a benefaction, and looked upon as a purely gratuitous present. Philosophy rectified these ideas, by demonstrating that royalty can have no other lawful origin than the interest and will of the people; that the king is nothing more than the first citizen and magistrate; that he exercises a delegated power, and that that power can only be legitimate on the condition of being employed for the advantage of those by whom it is conferred. If in most kingdoms the monarchy is hereditary, instead of being temporary and elective, the law has not been established for the benefit of a particular family, but for the good of the people, who believe that by such an arrangement, competition, rivalry, cabals, and instability are avoided. There is, therefore, a mutual contract between sovereigns and their subjects, or rather between governments and the governed, for the difference between a kingdom and a republic lies entirely in the form; the magistrate is either one or several, elected or hereditary; but the source of authority is everywhere the same.

Such is the philosophy of the social contract, and these principles upon which the privileges of modern society are partly founded, are entirely just; but other principles must also be recognised with them. It is true that governments can only exist for the benefit and by the will of the people; but it is not true that they only represent public interest in the mass. Their mission is, at the same time, more lofty and more sacred. If they only represented coalesced interests, what could be required of the law beyond being useful, and what more could be expected from the legislature than to watch over the safety and material prosperity of the country? When the sovereign, whether prince or magistrate, addresses the people, if he only speaks to them of profit and loss, does he rise to the becoming dignity of his station? Will not any one perceive that he degrades himself, and reduces the state to the level of a mercantile association? When, in a public assembly, a law is discussed, is the advantage only considered? Is not rather the first thought of the legislator on the justice of the matter? Are there not a thousand occasions when a nation is called upon to sacrifice interest to duty? If it is necessary to feed the body with bread, is it less essential to nourish the mind, and elevate the soul? If a country, regardless of right or honour, should increase its territory, extend its

influence, or double its wealth, would it be absolved from sin and shame by the ill-acquired prosperity? What then is the state, if it is required to be just before it is skilful? We answer, the state is armed duty and living morality. Undoubtedly an agreement between men, but, first of all, a compact between man and God. If then the state is connected with God by justice, it becomes necessary that this should be declared. If the law that it represents is not a human conviction, but the written expression of the divine will, it is indispensable that this sacred character should be acknowledged. To speak of immutable morality, of devotion to duty and country, and of Divine Providence, is not to infringe upon liberty of conscience. Society inflicts no outrage on the free thoughts of any of its members, when it merely proclaims these sacred dogmas upon which all men are agreed. To force down, or to impede a particular form of worship, is to tyrannise and usurp: to rest upon the doctrine of Divine Providence is to accord with universal conviction, to do honour to ourselves, and to give a religious character to a country and a government. They are ill acquainted with liberty who imagine that it can only be preserved by negatives; and they are bad judges of mankind who count entirely upon the strength of their reason, and abstain from speaking to their fellow-creatures through the imagination and the heart. Let religions and schools continue to teach their dogmas, but never let the state forget the greatness and protection of Providence.

Undoubtedly, the thought of God will spring up of itself in a mind naturally disposed to piety; particularly, if by habits of meditation, religious feelings have been fostered and matured. But the man, who by the peculiar construction of his mind and sensibilities, is little given to dwell on invisible things, he who has been brought up to think of nothing but the body and its wants, to gain, to covet, and to disburse money, who voluntarily limits his thoughts to the horizon of his worldly interests, who assumes a want of pride in denying what he cannot see, and in despising what he is unable to comprehend, is there nothing whatever of God in such a being, not a sentiment, or perception, or feeling, which some religious ceremony will suddenly draw from its darkness?

If we ourselves, accustomed as we are to reflect, we who have sought God with anxiety, who have leaped with joy when knowledge has enabled us to banish doubt, who make it our daily study to connect all our thoughts with this one supreme idea,

and to contemplate the synthesis of the world in its relation with the Creator, if we have moments of oblivion and faintness, if we feel too happy when an impressive image, an exhortation, and prayer, revive our feelings of piety, how then can we believe that religion can sustain itself alone and without help, in the common mass of minds? Would to God, that the state were not reduced to a few general formulas of piety, and that it possessed the force necessary to create a distinct form of worship! The power of these external symbols is so great and so universally acknowledged, that all legislators have recourse to them to excite and maintain patriotism. National festivals, popular songs, standards, cockades, what are all these but a worship of which our country is the object? Blind as we are, our country is living and present; its interest is our interest, its glory is our glory; in it we defend and love ourselves. God, in reality, is ever close to us, but through the weakness of our sight, the dazzling attractions of the world, and our own excessive absence of mind, he becomes so far removed, that it requires an effort to raise ourselves towards him. And shall we rely only on our own strength? shall there be no religious movement in our public places? shall there be no mention of God in the enactments of public authority? no solemn acts of thanksgiving to Providence in the name of an entire people, through those by whom they are represented? Shall there not be in the midst of crowds a voice to cry aloud to us, "Be just in God's name; love one another in the name of God?"

We have now only one more element of Church-worship to consider—the apostleship.

When we mention the word apostleship, our thoughts involuntarily recur to the twelve lowly men who, after the death of our Saviour, and with no power beyond the sublimity of their doctrine, undertook to change the aspect of the world, and succeeded in their enterprise; or towards those heroes of intellect, who in the darkness of the middle ages, fearlessly braved contempt, misery, and death, to overthrow error, and diffuse truth amongst men. These are the real apostles, animated by invincible faith, ever in the breach, giving up their lives for their creed, and leaving behind them a transformed and vanquished world. At present, the question only involves a peaceful instruction, a mission without danger.

But what is a philosopher? A man who possesses no more authority than that which he derives from his talent. He makes no domiciliary visits as a pastor, he is not associated with the joys

or sufferings of families; he has no official duties to perform anywhere. He writes a treatise without knowing who will read it, or whether it will be read at all. He deals with the most difficult, and sometimes the most unthankful subjects, and cannot be understood except by the most practised and cultivated minds. Nevertheless, he is judged by the first reader without appeal. He is neither safe from calumny, nor contempt, nor (according to the term) from persecution. He may think himself fortunate if he obtains a little absent attention from a few idle persons. The public ignore him, the learned turn him into ridicule, and other philosophers discuss his pretensions with prejudice; scarcely any one comprehends him, for no one is inclined to take the necessary trouble. He himself labours without rest to build up a system with which he is never entirely satisfied. Sometimes he is unable to discover a fact, and at others, having found it, he cannot clearly express his meaning. His life is one painful struggle against envy and prepossession: the more he loves human nature and truth, he more he has to suffer from his impotence and isolation. His superiority constitutes his punishment.

Nevertheless, whatever may be the obstacles with which the path of the philosopher is beset, there is still something which combats for philosophy—the force of liberty and truth, an invincible power, against which nothing can prevail. It would be in vain to strangle science, shut up the schools, interdict lectures, or burn books. Even persecution itself instructs. It is difficult to say whether full and absolute freedom of speech assists more in establishing a doctrine. Metaphysical discussions are confined to the learned, and seldom pass beyond the threshhold of the academy; but when once a single truth disengages itself from their disputes, it goes direct to its intended address—the mass of the people. It is quite possible that it may travel slowly, but the advance is noiseless and infallible, until by degrees all the world is convinced, and the paradox of yesterday becomes the fact of to-day. What is common sense, if not a mass of evident opinions, which are derived from education, and which become, as it were, a part of our being? And why is common sense in any successive age composed of an additional number of new facts? Because there are unknown and neglected men, who insert in books, which are not read, a single truth in the midst of a legion of errors. Time carries away the error, and humanity inherits what remains.

When Descartes, at the beginning of the seventeenth century,

penned this memorable sentence, "Believe nothing that does not appear to be clearly and evidently true," he excited no sensation except amongst men of letters. A century after, his doctrine, despite its force, was forgotten for the moment; but the sentence remained, and the principle it announced became the common faith of all that was active and enthusiastic in the world; it engendered the Encylopedists, and the Encyclopedists led to the Revolution. The code which for the first time promulgated Liberty and Equality, is nothing more than a legal consecration of the principles of the Cartesian philosophy. The history of an age is only the development of an idea.

There is therefore an apostleship of science, and lofty genius is not absolutely essential to its exercise. All that is done in the world to root out prejudices and disseminate instruction, to inspire men with a taste for, and an understanding of liberty, is profitable to philosophy. When we believe that we have discovered a portion of truth, it becomes our duty to endeavour to give it publicity, to consecrate our lives to its advancement, to hold as nothing in comparison, personal interests, ambition, or vanity; to persevere without halting or drawing back; to honour ourselves in our doctrine, to bear witness to it by our conduct; to identify ourselves with the course we have embraced, and to be ever ready to maintain it by sacrifice and exertion. In the absence of all other consecration, let moral elevation be the seal of philosophical apostleship. An upright heart is the first organ of truth. He who argues upon goodness and truth, without sound conviction, descends to the rank of a sophist; but to inquire after both with ardour, to teach them with respect and diffidence, is to perform the work of a man and a philosopher. Whatever may be the weakness of individual ability, God will bless and fertilise efforts which are directed towards what is right, and look for no other recompense.

Let us now bring under view, before we close these pages, the principal dogmas of natural religion, and the leading precepts of worship. An all-powerful and immutable God, who has created and governs the world by general laws; a future state of existence which will fulfil all the promises and repair all the injustices of this life—such is the doctrine. A heart filled with the love of God and of mankind—a firm resolution to accomplish an allotted duty, and to carry out the views of providence in doing good; such are the prayer and the commandment. The whole system is comprised in two words, and these two words are

accessible to the knowledge and conviction of every mind. Natural religion is not, like metaphysics, reserved for chosen spirits; it relies on no particular theory, it demands no extraordinary effort of reflection. It is simple, easy, and popular; it appeals to the heart in conjunction with the understanding; it seems less to expand before us new horizons, than to call us back to known and cherished localities. In fact, natural religion possesses us from the cradle; its lessons, mixed up with many others, form the solace and strength of our earliest thoughts; they return to us on every side in proportion as we arrive at maturity in body and mind; nature, as soon as we are capable of admiring her, speaks to us of the grandeur and goodness of God; society, when we become acquainted with its elements and influence, reminds us that without the thought of him and his presence there can be no justice. Grief also is a potent teacher. While the soul is lacerated, and the tenderest ties are broken, a sweet and soothing voice makes itself heard from the depths of the heart—religion with its promises, or rather God with his love. To sum up the precepts of religion, and form them into a body of doctrine, we have only to receive into the mind the ideas which have fertilised it, and into the heart the emotions by which it has been moved.

To adore and love God, there is no occasion to bring him down to the level of human understanding. On the contrary, it is because we know him to be incomprehensible that we feel and acknowledge him to be the creator and father of the world. In proportion as our own faith is humble, we believe in the divine omnipotence. This is the true hope of humanity, for it is easy, simple, and self-evident. To comprehend it, nothing is wanting, but a heart in the right place, and an unwarped understanding. God is the true father of a family who enlightens all his children, and proportions himself to the weakness of man's intelligence.

Nothing more strongly proves the importance and truth of natural religion than the efficacy of its precepts. It cannot but be divine, for it is founded on charity and justice. Its first law is to perform our duty; its worship is entirely comprised in that sacred obligation. Prayer is labour and benevolence. A pious mind is one that honours God in its own freedom, and the freedom of its brethren; in loving, assisting, and instructing them. Knowledge, work, liberty, and love—in these precepts are contained the consecration and essence of all natural religion. In times, happily remote from the present, some men believed that

it was sufficient to do no wrong. They placed the perfection of virtue in the haughty consciousness of keeping themselves free from stain. They founded a school, the first precept of which was abstinence from the commission of evil. This is what was called stoicism, equally removed from good and ill, at the same time courageous, austere, and unprofitable. Liberty without fraternity, reason without feeling. God has not created us for this sterile innocence. He only lends us our endowments. Wealth, intelligence, sensibility, strength, these human treasures, of which man is the depository, derive all their value and holiness from being imparted and spread abroad. Charity has succeeded to the selfish, haughty, and barren wisdom of antiquity. Men's hearts became accessible to pity and compassion under the softening and controlling influence of Christianity. They went forth to seek the poor and the diseased, in the name of God; they gave them food, remedies, and tears. At last the day burst into light when religion became perfect by a more complete knowledge of the greatness of man's destiny. On that day, the rich, the happy, the learned, and the exalted, were taught that the poor, the suffering, and the ignorant, were their equals and their brethren. They comprehended that the first act of piety to Heaven was to enlighten and to nourish inferior understandings, and to assist liberty, by rendering labour easy. Already national hatreds are becoming antiquated prejudices; there are no more distinctions of caste, and intolerance is regarded as folly. The spirit of peace is beginning to replace throughout the world the heroic madness of war; idleness is looked upon as a fault and a misfortune, and all who are capable of love and reflection unite in a holy crusade against ignorance. Thy religion, O God! is love, hope, reason, liberty, and peace!

NOTES.

I.—NOTE, ON THE INFINITE OF LOCKE; PAGE 49.

M. Jules Simon scarcely does justice to our great countryman in saying that "the infinite of Locke is composed of an indefinite number of units joined to each other, and for this reason he concludes that the world may be infinite:"—"Et c'est pourquoi il pense que le monde peut-être infini."

True, he teaches that we gain our ideas of infinity by joining together an indefinite number of units. "Every one that has any idea of any stated lengths of space, as a foot, finds that he can repeat that idea; and, joining it to the former, make the idea of two feet; and by the addition of a third, three feet; and so on, without ever coming to an end of his addition, whether of the same idea of a foot, or if he pleases of doubling it, or any other idea he has, of any length, as a mile, or diameter of the earth, or of the orbis magnus: for whichsoever of these he takes, and how often soever he doubles, or any otherwise multiplies it, he finds that after he has continued his doubling in his thoughts, and enlarged his idea as much as he pleases, he has no more reason to stop, nor is one jot nearer the end of such addition than he was at first setting out. The power of enlarging his idea of space by farther additions remaining still the same, he hence takes the idea of infinite space." It does not however follow, from this argument, that the world is infinite, nor even that infinite space exists; but only, according to Locke's theory, that by this process we *gain the idea of infinity.* Indeed he adds, with his usual modesty, "This, I think, is the way whereby the mind gets the idea of infinite space. It is a quite different consideration to examine

whether the mind has the idea of such a boundless space actually existing, since our ideas are not always proofs of the existence of things; but yet since this comes here in our way, I suppose I may say, that we are apt to think that space in itself is actually boundless; to which imagination, the idea of space or expansion of itself naturally leads us." Book ii. chap. 17, secs. iii. iv. We cannot find anything in his Essay which gives the least support to the notion that he thought the world might possibly be infinite. Several casual statements which we meet with are inconsistent with it; as when he speaks of "the possibility of a body's moving into a void space beyond the utmost bounds of body." And again, of "the idea of empty, pure space beyond the confines of all bodies." It is also to be remembered that he thinks it "no insignificant subtilty to say, that we are carefully to distinguish between the idea of infinity of a space and the idea of a space infinite." The first is nothing but "the endless progression of the mind over the idea of space constantly repeated;" the latter is "an attempt to adjust a standing measure to a growing bulk, which carries in it a plain contradiction." Essay, Sec. 7.

II.—NOTE, ON THE LOVE OF GOD; PAGE 99.

"The love of God is so necessary a sentiment, that it may be found even in the bosom of the atheist. We may slight, forget, or deny God, but not to love him is impossible." These propositions, as well as Pascal's statement that "the heart naturally loves universal being," adduced in support of them, can be received only in a limited sense and with many exceptions. In truth, they are to be taken as instances of that hyperbolical style in which French writers love to indulge even in metaphysics; but which, amongst ourselves, is confined to works of imagination and of fiction. How can the love of God warm the bosom of the atheist? in what sense is it possible that he who forgets God, or denies his being, should yet love him? Our author solves the paradox when he explains his meaning. The atheist cannot dispossess himself of all admiration for the Creator of the universe. In certain moods of his mind a feeling of wonder and astonishment steals over him, and, in spite of his atheism, he is conscious of a God. This is equally

true of irreligious men in general; they cannot entirely dispossess themselves of the consciousness of God's presence. Sometimes this feeling kindles into admiration of his goodness; generally it goes no further than to inspire uneasiness, if not awe and terror, such as we feel in the presence of those who have the means, and, perhaps, may have the disposition to destroy us.

All this we may admit, and it is all that the argument requires. But can any such emotions be properly termed the love of God? The slightest analysis of our own feelings may convince us that love to a superior is not pure affection, but affection mingled with respect. The more exalted the object of our regard, the stronger the sentiment of respect; till at length it assumes the character of reverence or veneration. This is true of our love of God. It is inseparable from reverence. Now the atheist and the irreligious man having no reverence, have no love to God. Their admiration is a stupid wonder like that of the savage at the triumphs of a science the principles of which he does not understand. For love to God would produce its natural results; desire to secure his favour, pleasure in obeying his commands, and the disposition to sacrifice our interests to his honour.

There is no subject upon which the Scriptures are more explicit. The world is in arms against its Creator. If the fall of man had never been related by the pen of Moses, the state of the world would lead a thoughtful mind to the conclusion (as in fact it led Plato and his followers) that mankind are not in the condition for which God designed them. Love to God is no longer a natural emotion; it is introduced with violence, despised, resisted, misunderstood: and at length implanted only by the regenerating influence of a divine agent acting on the soul.

III.—NOTE, ON PRAYER; PAGE 224.

The philosophical objection to prayer, which appears so formidable to our author, has long perplexed certain schools of theology. The moralist divines of the last century were baffled by it. Dr. Hugh Blair, the most popular though by no means the most profound of these writers, takes up the same ground with M. Jules Simon. "To what purpose, it may be asked, is homage addressed

to a being whose purpose is unalterably fixed; to whom our righteousness extendeth not; whom by no arguments we can persuade, and by no supplications we can mollify? The objection," he replies, "would have weight, if our religious addresses were designed to work any alteration on God; either by giving him information of what he did not know; or by exciting affections which he did not possess; or by inducing him to change measures which he had previously formed. But they are only crude and imperfect notions of religion which can suggest such ideas. The change which our devotions are intended to make is upon ourselves, not upon the Almighty. Their chief efficacy is derived from the good dispositions which they raise and cherish in the human soul."* This is, in a few words, the explanation of the difficulty given by M. Jules Simon; to which he adds, in accordance with most writers who take this view of the subject, that devotion consists not so much in acts of supplication as in acts of praise. Thus evading the difficulty, instead of manfully confronting it.

But, in the first place, these explanations give no satisfaction to a christian, because they are directly opposed to the voice of holy Scripture. Did prayer work no change in "measures which God had previously formed," when the life of Hezekiah was prolonged fifteen years in answer to his supplications? Or when God staid the destroying angel in the midst of his career of death at the instance of the penitent King David? Numerous instances not less decisive will occur to the mind of every reader who has the least acquaintance with his Bible. Nor is it true, again, that praise and thanksgiving compose the chief elements of devotion, or that prayer is not always necessary. The case is exactly the reverse. Our Lord delivered a parable to teach us that "men ought always to pray, and not to faint;" and the point of it lies in this; that an unjust judge gave a righteous sentence rather than submit to the restless importunity of an injured plaintiff. Hence the moral comes out with overwhelming force: "How much more shall not God avenge his own elect which cry day and night unto him?" Luke xviii. And that the practice of prayer as distin-

* Sermon iv. vol. i.

guished from thanksgiving is enjoined upon us in Scripture, is sufficiently proved by a few quotations : "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened." Matt. vii. 7. "Watch ye therefore, and pray always." Luke xxi. 36. "Be careful for nothing; but, in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Phil. iv. 6. "Pray without ceasing." 1 Thess. v. 17.

We have frequent occasion to notice, with regret and not without surprise, that M. Jules Simon has but a moderate acquaintance with English metaphysicians and moralists. He seems to be ignorant of the works of Paley, whose remarks on this subject, had he ever read them, it is impossible he should have overlooked in the course of this discussion.

The objection is, that God, being infinitely wise and good, will bestow whatever is fit for us without praying, and that if anything be not fit for us, we cannot obtain it by praying. To this Dr. Paley replies, sententiously; "that it may be agreeable to perfect wisdom to grant that to our prayers which it would not have been agreeable to the same wisdom to have given us without praying for." This must be obvious; since, that for God to withhold favours till we ask for them tends of necessity, as he goes on to observe, "to encourage devotion among his rational creatures, and to keep up and circulate a knowledge and sense of their dependency upon him." It is urged, again, that God will always do what is best from the moral perfection of his nature, and that too whether we pray or not. This objection, likewise, Paley has anticipated. "It proceeds," he says, "upon the supposition that there is but one mode of acting for the best; and that the divine will is necessarily determined to that mode only; both which positions presume a knowledge of universal nature far beyond what we are capable of attaining."* "It is indeed," says another very able writer, "it is indeed a very unsatisfactory mode of speaking to say, God will always do what is best; since we can conceive him capable in all cases of doing what is still better for

* Moral Philosophy.

the creature, and also that the creature is capable of receiving more and more from his infinite fulness for ever. All that can be rationally meant by such a phrase is, that, in the circumstances of the case, God will always do what is most consistent with his own wisdom, goodness, and holiness; but then the disposition to pray, and the act of praying, add a new circumstance to every case, and often bring many other new circumstances along with them." *

It may be further said, in reply to the objection derived from the perfection of God's character, and the consequent immutability of his conduct; that this immutability may consist, not so much in God's adherence to his *purposes* as in his adherence to the *principles* of his administration. He may purpose to do under certain conditions which are dependent on the free agency of man what he will not do otherwise. And the reason may be this; that an immutable adherence to the principles of his administration requires it. Prayer is in Scripture made one of these conditions; and if God has established it as one of the principles of his moral government to accept prayer, in every case in which he has given us authority to ask, he has not, we may be assured, entangled his actual government of the world with the bonds of such an eternal predestination of particular events, as either to reduce prayer to a mere form of words, or not to be able himself, consistently with his decrees, to answer it, whenever it is encouraged by his express commands.

* Richard Watson. Theological Institutes.

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